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Introducing Modernist Short Stories through Participatory Drama to Chinese Students in Higher Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts Education

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Contents	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	6
ABSTRACT	7
Chapter One	8
Introduction	8
1.1 My Interest in the Topic	8
1.2 General Education & Open-Space Learning	13
1.3 Research Design	16
1.3.1. Teaching Texts	16
1.3.2 Teaching Method	17
1.4 Pilot Study	18
1.5. The Two Case Studies	19
1.5.1. Research Context	19
1.5.2. Case One: How Wang-Fo Was Saved	19
1.5.3 Case Two: Theme of the Traitor and the Hero	20
1.5.4. Issues Emerging From both Cases	21
1.6 Research Methods	22
1.7 Structure of the Thesis	22
Chapter Two	25
Literature Review Part One	25
2.1 The Current Situation	26
2.2.1 The View of Historical Materialism	29
2.2.2 Reflectionist Theory	32
2.2.3 The Dangers of the Marxist Approach	33
2.2.4 Literary Modernism	34
2.3 A New Approach to Modernist Literature	38
2.3.1 The Common Reader	40
2.3.2 The Company We Keep	41
2.3.3 Studying Form	43
2.4 Participatory Drama and Modernist Short Stories	44
2.4.1 Teaching Texts	44
2.4.2 Translation	45

2.4.2 The Principles of Translation underpinning this Research Project ..	47
2.5 Translation of Narrative	52
2.5.1 Memory and Destiny.....	52
2.5.2 Telling and Showing.....	54
2.6 Reception Theory	55
2.6.1 The Role of the Reader	57
2.6.2 Subjective Interpretation.....	57
2.6.3 Interpretive Community.....	58
2.6.4 Horizon of Expectation	58
2.6.5 Horizon Change and Aesthetic Distance	59
2.6.6 Implied Reader	60
2.7 Drama Experience as Reading Experience	61
2.7.1 Audience Participation	61
2.7.2 A Drama Community	62
Chapter Three	63
Literature Review Part Two	63
Within the Context of General Education	63
3.1. The Rise of General Education in China	63
3.2 The Reason for Introducing General Education in China.....	65
3.3 What Can Drama Do?	67
3.4 What Can Literature Do?	69
3.4.1 Literature and Human Life Experience.....	70
3.4.2 The Aesthetic Outlook	73
Chapter Four	81
Methodology and Field Work.....	81
4.1 Introduction.....	81
4.2.2 What I learned from the Pilot Study	83
4.3 Case Studies.....	85
4.3.1 Part One	89
4.3.2 Part Two.....	98
4.3.3 Limitations	105
4.4 Data Analysis and Triangulation	107
4.1.1 Quantitative Data Analysis	107
4.1.2 Qualitative Data Analysis	108

4. 5. Ethical Issues	110
4.5.1 Informed consent	110
4.5.2 Privacy	111
4.5.3 Conclusion	111
Chapter Five	112
Analysis of the Pilot Study	112
5.1 Introduction	112
5.2 Pilot Design	113
5.2.1 Observation	114
5.2.2 Interview	115
5.2.3 Coding Categories	115
5.3 Reading Experience	116
5.3.1 The Intimate Love of Reading	116
5.3.2 Literary Education	119
5.3.3 Reading Difficulties	121
5.4 Drama Lesson	124
5.4.1 Setting	124
5.4.2 Intertextuality	127
5.5 Conclusion	130
Chapter Six	133
Part 1: The Research Context; Analysis and Discussion	133
6.1 Introduction	133
6.2 Research Design	134
6.3 Coding Categories	135
6.4 Socio-historical Context	136
6.5 Edification and Aesthetics	142
6.5.1 Edification as a diffuse effect	143
6.5.2 The understanding of humanity	146
6.5.3 Moral values and aesthetic value	147
6.6 Literary Education	151
6.6.1 Conventional literary education	152
6.6.2 The importance of the teacher	154
6.6.3 The drama elements in literature teaching	155
6.7 Conclusion	159

Chapter Seven.....	161
Part 2 (1): Analysis and Discussion of Case One.....	161
7.1 Textual Analysis.....	161
7.1.1 About the Author	161
7.1.2 The Story	163
7.1.3 On Beauty.....	168
7.1.4 The Eastern View.....	176
7.2 Planning the Scheme of Work.....	180
7.2.1 Pre-existing Understanding of Art.....	181
7.2.2 Metaphor: The Aesthetic Pleasure	184
7.2.3 Different Response to Kantian Aesthetics	185
7.2.4 Beauty and Happiness.....	188
7.3 Analysis of the Teaching Practice	190
7.3.1 Metaphor.....	191
7.3.2 Art, Beauty, Desire.....	195
Chapter Eight	219
Part 2 (2): Analysis and Discussion of Case Two	219
8.1 Textual Analysis	219
8.1.1 About the Author.....	220
8.1.2 The Borgesian Style	221
8.1.3 The Story	226
8.2 Planning the Scheme of Work.....	232
8.2.1 Challenges	233
8.2.2 Scheme Design.....	236
8.3 Analysis of the Teaching Practice	247
8.3.1. The Interplay between Fiction and Non-fiction	248
8.3.2 The Shakespeare Reflection	254
8.3.3 From Telling to Showing.....	263
8.3.4 Telling and Retelling: the Spiral Mode of Narrative	269
8.3.5 Epilogue: The Mirror Image in Real Life.....	275
Chapter 9.....	280
Analysis of Issues Emerging From Both Cases	280
9.1 Introducing the Idea of ‘the Fictional’	280
9.1.1 The Boundary between the Real and the Fictional	282

9.1.2 Coleridge's Flower: Crossing the Boundary	286
9.1.3 The World of Fantasies.....	292
9.2 Drama as Literary Community	306
9.2.1 Implied Reader	307
9.2.2 Interpretive Community & Horizon of Expectation	310
9.2.3 Reception Theory, General Education & Open-space Learning.....	315
Chapter Ten	320
Conclusion.....	320
10. 1 Research Questions	320
10.2 Summary of the Project.....	321
10.2 Main Findings.....	323
10.3 Limitations of the Research Project.....	325
10. 5 Recommendations	327
10. 6 Personal Significance	328
Bibliography	329
Appendix	340
Appendix A: Original Texts	340
How Wang-Fo Was Saved.....	340
Theme of the Traitor and the Hero	354
Appendix B	359
Summary notes for the Drama Schemes.....	359
Scheme 1: How Wang-Fo Was Saved.....	359
Scheme 2: Theme of the Traitor and the Hero	364
Appendix C	371
Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph.....	371

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the possibilities of introducing modernist literature to Chinese university students by means of participatory drama. The target students are not principally those studying in literature departments but those from other disciplines. The potential space for this teaching is in the courses of general education that many universities have introduced in China in recent years. The research is premised on evidence that intelligent readers in China nonetheless find it very difficult to engage with modernist texts. The thesis begins with a literature review that explores why this is the case and proposes that the problem lies in the restricted nature of their literary education, dominated as it is by Marxist criticism and reflectionist theory. It argues for other, broader theories of literary understanding to be applied, specifically drawing from reception theory and the approach to literary study known as poetics. It also argues for the potential of participatory drama as an innovative pedagogy that could help students connect with the texts, which are far removed from the realistic texts that their high school education introduces them to. The fieldwork itself was undertaken between 2012 and 2015 with five groups of Chinese university students, three of these in Beijing and two from students following Masters courses in the University of Warwick, UK. The fieldwork was conducted in two parts. Part 1 consisted of a questionnaire and interviews to students from the teaching groups to gather information relevant to this project, chiefly concerning their reading habits and literary tastes; and Part 2 consisted of two case studies, each of which principally consisted of a three-hour long workshop on a specific modernist short story: these were *How Wang-Fo was Saved* by Marguerite Yourcenar and *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* by Jorge Luis Borges. Each workshop was taught to all five groups. Theoretical explanations and practical descriptions are provided as to how the stories were adapted into dramatic form, along with detailed analyses of the texts themselves. This is followed, in each case, by a detailed analysis and discussion of data gathered from observation and recordings of the workshops and from subsequent interviews with students. My concluding chapter reflects upon the strengths and limitations of the research and examines the possibilities of how its positive findings could be acted upon in the future.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 My Interest in the Topic

I have sometimes dreamt, at least, that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and layers and statesmen come to receive their rewards-their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble-the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when he sees us coming with our books under our arms, 'Look, they need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading. (Woolf, 1984, p. 270)

Although it was many years ago, I still clearly remember how, on the first day I went to primary school, my mother took away all my toys because she saw schooling as the end of childhood. From that day onward, I was not permitted to play but only to focus on my studies. Fortunately she left me with all of my storybooks, for reading, as she believed, is part of education. Yet to me, these books were more like friends; they kept me company, conferred on me a degree of freedom through imagination, sweet and precious for an only child who was also forced to obey various strict rules in her daily life.

At the age of nine, children's books no longer satisfied my growing appetite. I started to find 'more sophisticated storybooks' on my parents' bookshelves. The first book I picked up convinced me of its complexity by its name, a foreign, long-winded name (for a child) - *Anna Karenina*.

With the help of a student dictionary, I started to read the book. The opening chapters captured me straightway; I waited almost impatiently for Anna to show up and, once she appeared on the train, I was immediately amazed by her glamour and completely adored her as do other characters in the novel. And I vividly remember the ball scene, in which Kitty dresses up like a sparking doll. Like that young girl, I was also wondering what Anna would wear. Sometimes confidence comes from innocence and ignorance. I shut the book, fetched pencil and paper and decided to have a competition with the author to see who could illustrate the heroine better. When there were words I did not know how to write, I went to the kitchen to ask my mother. I can no longer recall any details of the ridiculous costume that I designed for Anna, but I can still remember how she is described in the book, wearing a black, low-cut, velvet gown with Venetian guipure, and "her charm was just that she always stood out against her attire".

The words that describe Kitty's feelings towards Anna can be used to describe mine towards the author: I admired the author more than ever, and more and more acute was my suffering. I felt overwhelmed. At the age of nine, my dream of becoming a writer was completely shattered by a man called Leo Tolstoy.

I did not finish the book then, nor did I read it thoroughly. The text was far too complex for a nine-year old, but I derived immense pleasure from Tolstoy's company. The frozen, snowy railway station where Anna meets Vronsky became one of the most beautiful literary images in my memory. I have long since wondered how such a complex book could capture such a naïve reader's imagination. Firstly it must be through the storytelling and characterization. The fictional world was not one that I was familiar with but it was a world in which I could recognize that other people –such as my parents – might live. Moreover, it was the crafting of words, the enchantment of art, which was an appealing mystery to me. What else? It was the most courageous writing competition in my entire life. Although Tolstoy had defeated me completely, he did not despise me from his throne. On the contrary, we had shared an equal and intimate interaction, which had taught me a reader's humility through the exquisite beauty of his writing. Ever since then I started to read literary classics, in Borges's words, "with predetermined enthusiasm and with mysterious loyalty" (1973, p.262), because I had learned that great artistry would be waiting for me somewhere, with beauty I could scarcely yet imagine.

The next time I tried to read *Anna Karenina* was in secondary school. The book was on the list of selected readings for secondary school students in China. With serious learning objectives in mind, I began with the translator's introduction for some guidance, which was nothing like the reading experience I had had before. The story, I was informed, "depicts a historical era" that "capitalism drastically affected the serf system", and the heroine is "a courageous woman who challenges feudal forces and seeks for love and

freedom; but also suffers from being trapped within feudal ethics and religion” (1990, pp 2-3). My feeling on reading this was like Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times*. When Mr Gradgrind asks her to define a horse, the circus girl, who has lived with horses all her life, panics and fails to give the ‘correct answer’ – “Quadruped, Graminivorous, Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive...” (1994. p. 6).

Great literature reflects and illustrates the truth of human society, this is the literary outlook that I was taught at school. In literature class, teachers always asked us to summarize the theme of the reading text, then told us about the significant social meanings that the author was conveying through the text; and the moral or life lesson that we should learn from reading it. I took pages of notes from my teachers, standard answers on how correctly to interpret the literary masterpieces in my textbook. I learned that:

The Necklace by Maupassant criticizes the vanity of the petit bourgeoisie.

The Metamorphosis by Kafka is a denunciation of the cold, harsh human relationships that typify capitalist societies.

Hamlet by Shakespeare shows the strength of will of humanists breaking loose from feudal constraints in Renaissance Britain and also reveals the limitations of the rising capitalist class.

This discourse of class struggle, of the primacy of socio-historical background was generally applied throughout my literary education. Such a literary education in China can be seen to be far from limited to my single case, as I will proceed to argue later in this thesis. I admit that such a socio-

historical analysis of literature has provided me with a particular viewpoint; through it I can see a grand picture of social changes and human lives in particular historical eras. However, I have never been fully convinced by such a system or formula for analyzing and teaching literary works. I have never believed that there is a universal law that can be used to interpret all literary works. My personal reading experience has informed me that many great works give us understandings that go beyond their eras. I have never felt that reading made me any better or worse in a moral sense. Villains in stories often seduce me through their charm and wit, but I have never thought of following in their footsteps. In addition, socio-historical readings did not grant me the same pleasure that I found in my own private reading, such as the first time that I read *Anna Karenina*. More importantly, although it illustrates (or at least tries to) the meaning of the work (**what**) and explores the social and cultural origins of it (**why**), it hardly focuses on **how** a story has been created, the mysterious magic that a great artist performs¹, which always appeals to me.

My dissatisfaction with the way that literature has been taught was one of the initial reasons that drove me to conduct this research project. In this research, I wanted to find out how influential conventional literary education is in China; how it has affected Chinese students' literary horizons; what its theoretical base is; but more importantly, I also aimed to introduce some other possibilities for engaging with literature, which would focus more on the

¹There are studies of form in Chinese literary education, which however consist of very brief analyses of characterization and writing style. These, along with a summary of the theme, are presented in the teacher's book as standard interpretations of the text. For example, Hamlet's use of language is described as "straightforward, undisguised; full of metaphors and ironies; and sharp" (Anon., 2008). Such analysis is not based upon close reading of the text, but is an extremely hasty summary and not always even faithful.

reader's experience, especially her intimate interaction with the text; as well as the study of form, experiencing how literary effects work, how a literary work has been created and become part of a literary community.

1.2 General Education & Open-Space Learning

Educational theorists in Mainland China have argued that Chinese educationalists now have to deal with a variety of “unique challenges”, such as the tradition of examination-oriented education, the specialized training in higher education that has been influenced by the Soviet model, and the appeal of the market economy which requires professional training (Xing and Ng, 2013, p.4). Living in this context, secondary school students have to master the discourse of textual analysis, described above, due to the pressure of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination².

Furthermore, students in higher education have little opportunity to access the study of literature unless they go on to study in a department of literature.

In the 1990s, many higher education institutions in China, especially the most prestigious universities, introduced programmes of ‘general education’, derived from the concept of ‘liberal arts education’ in Ivy League universities in the US (Hu and Cao, 2013). These general education programmes were conducted through elective courses, open to all undergraduates in a university, the curriculum design seeking to provide a knowledge-based, interdisciplinary mode of education across multiple academic fields. In most institutions, the modules in this general education programme take the form

²The National Higher Education Entrance Examination, commonly known as Gaokao (高考, Higher Education Exam), is an annual academic exam in Mainland China. The result of this exam is an only prerequisite for entrance into almost all the higher education institutions for undergraduate study.

of traditional lectures, introducing foundational rather than specialized knowledge (ibid).

General education programmes have to face a number of challenges within the Chinese educational context, and their curriculum design in many institutions, including the most prestigious, face many problems in terms of course content, pedagogy and their relation to the university's overall curriculum design. However, general education, as a curriculum movement, has taken "central stage in today's undergraduate education" not only in China, but also in Taiwan and Hong Kong. This is mainly because the humanistic tradition behind it, as well as its objective of cultivating cultural sensitivities and social skills, suit a perceived and increasing need for higher education in the greater China region, to educate "thoughtful citizens instead of useful profit-seekers" (Xing and Ng, 2013, p.1-2). Putting this educational ideal aside, what I see in this curriculum movement in China is a possible opportunity to fracture the discipline-based curriculum system in Chinese institutions and to provide a wider range of young people with an introductory course in certain literary works for which they may need the kind of guidance that they normally cannot access in their studies.

This research is also inspired by the Open-space Learning (OSL) conducted by the University of Warwick's CAPITAL Centre, which has established what I perceive to be a strong example of an interdisciplinary model of pedagogy within the context of higher education. Starting with a project for teaching Shakespeare in 2006, the CAPITAL Centre provided Warwick English undergraduates taking a compulsory module on Shakespeare with a "shared

space”, in which “teachers, students and practitioners (writers, actors, directors, others in the creative industries) could come together and inform each other’s work”. What for me was most significant was that these interactions were achieved through a ‘workshop model of learning’ (Bate and Brock, 2007, pp. 343-4). This interdisciplinary model of mutual practice was referred to as Open-space Learning. OSL was not intended to replace traditional education formats like lectures or seminars, but sought to explore the potential for teaching and learning across the disciplines at the academic level (Monk, Rutter, Neelands and Heron, 2011).

I have experienced examples of the pedagogy of the OSL during my MA in Drama and Theatre Education at the University of Warwick, which I successfully completed in 2010. Moreover, I also see the potential to integrate this idea with the trend for general education in China. It is possible for Chinese universities to design an interdisciplinary elective course on literary studies open to students majoring in other, different courses, such as history, philosophy, natural science, fine arts or business. Like the CAPITAL Centre’s Shakespeare project, these could provide a shared space – both physical and conceptual – for the teacher and students. Since the participants/ students come from different academic backgrounds, each of them could contribute to a literary community with particular perspectives derived from different personal experiences and academic expertise. The means for conducting this pedagogy could be through a workshop model, and CAPTIAL Centre’s research has provided what I think could be a successful model for such learning in participatory drama.

1.3 Research Design

This research intends to demonstrate the possibility of using participatory drama to teach western modernist short stories to Chinese students in higher education. The whole project was conducted in three parts with six groups of students in Beijing, China and Warwick University in the UK. The project design included a pilot study intended to establish some brief understanding of students' literary outlook, reading habits and their perception of one modernist text, as well as the use of drama pedagogy, which I undertook with a group of postgraduate students at Warwick. This was followed by two case studies focusing on the effectiveness of using drama to teach two different texts – *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* by the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, and *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*, by the French writer, Marguerite Yourcenar. The entire work on each of these stories constituted a single case, and I conducted both cases with the same five groups of students in Beijing and at Warwick.

1.3.1. Teaching Texts

I must now explain my reasons for choosing modernist short stories as my teaching content. Literary modernism has always been a blank area in Chinese literary education. Due to its complexity and literary innovations, conventional literary education in China fails to introduce it to young readers, and students struggle to make sense of the text with the literary knowledge that they acquire at school (Wu, 2003, 2009). Thus, I took western modernist literature as a departure point to investigate the limits of Chinese literary

education and the possibilities of different literary theories and new teaching approaches.

1.3.2 Teaching Method

The project took the form of participatory drama workshops as the key teaching method. Participatory drama is the term that some specialists use to embrace the forms of interactive drama practices pioneered by practitioners of drama in education, such as Dorothy Heathcote, and later developed by leading figures such as Cecily O'Neill (1995) and Jonathan Neelands (1990).³ However this drama pedagogy was influenced by a variety of concerns and informed by literary theories, including Leavisite criticism (Leavis, 1988), the notion of 'the common reader' (Woolf, 1984), reception theory (Iser, 1978; Fish, 1970: 1980; Jauss, 1970; 1982) writings on theatre audience (Langer, 1997), on intimate readership (Booth, 1988), and the study of poetics (Jakobson, 2008; Culler, 1975: 1997). Through a variety of drama exercises adapted from the original texts, the teaching was framed within a variety of educational objectives. It aimed to pave the way towards the creation of a literary community focused on the experience of common readers and their interactions with the texts as well as with each other. It saw the development of humane understanding and self-enrichment as a key educational concern whilst, at the same time, focusing more precisely on introducing the poetics of fiction to Chinese university students as a new way (for them) of accessing literary understanding. This approach studies form,

³Participatory drama is the term preferred by Winston. See, for example, Winston and Lin (2015)

narrative and the rhetoric devices of fiction in order to present how aesthetic effects in literary works are achieved.

During this process, the teaching also faced a number of challenges related to adapting the texts into participatory drama. Inspired by translation theories (Jakobson, 1959, Derrida, 1999; Venuti, 1995; Benjamin, 1999), I developed my principles in the design of the two drama schemes, which took into consideration a variety of issues concerning the translation of one narrative form, discourse, language and culture to another. The drama exercises were also influenced by studies on the rhetoric of fiction (Booth, 1983), and by books on the mechanisms and techniques of drama work (Edgar, 2009) as well as O'Neill's (1995) and Fleming's (1997) works that theorise the practices of drama education.

1.4 Pilot Study

The intention of the pilot study was to provide baseline data on Chinese university students' understandings of literature in general as well as their possible responses to modernist works. The research questions guiding the pilot were:

- ♦ What are the students' reading habits and tastes? Is reading literature, especially fiction, in any ways significant in their cultural lives?
- ♦ How do the students appreciate and evaluate the values of literary works? To what extent does their school education affect their literary understanding?
- ♦ What do the students think of complex and difficult works, especially 20th century modernist literature? What are the main obstacles they see in

reading those texts?

- ♦ Can participatory drama change the way of reading a story from perception to participation? And does it help young people to understand and to engage in the text; and if so, in what ways?

Limited in scope, the data emerging from this pilot study still provided a valuable insight into the current situation regarding the target group's literary perceptions; and informed the research study on how drama could facilitate students' understandings of modernist texts, especially in terms of the change from one narrative form to another and the translation of discourse.

1.5.The Two Case Studies

1.5.1. Research Context

The research with each group of students was based upon an investigation into their literary horizons, the literary education they had had previously, and their opinions about adaptations of literary works into dramatic form. Such an understanding of the educational context worked for three purposes: 1) to adjust the lesson plans according to students' literary capabilities; 2) to investigate the current situation of literary education in China and the target group's reading experiences, even though it could only present the picture within a relatively small group; 3) to offer a specific context to look at students' responses to the teaching in my later analyses.

1.5.2. Case One: How Wang-Fo Was Saved

Case One in this project utilized participatory drama to teach the short story *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*. I began with a thorough textual analysis of the original story, which mainly focuses on issues of beauty and art. The drama

design was inspired by theories on beauty and aesthetics (Winston, 2010; Nehamas, 2007), and was centred around problematic issues arising from Kantian aesthetics as raised within the story itself.

The key questions guiding the analysis of the teaching practice were:

- What are the effects of the drama on facilitating the students to engage in the issues about art and beauty raised by the text, especially the disinterested view of beauty in Kantian aesthetics?
- To what extent has the students' previous education affected their understanding of beauty and art? How do these understandings find expression in their drama work?
- In what ways do the communal drama exercises challenge students' aesthetic views?

These questions and those of the second case study are, of course, specific to the text under study. This is the normal practice of case study – to prioritise the particular rather than the general. However, I do in later chapters explain how they relate to the more general concerns of modernism.

1.5.3 Case Two: Theme of the Traitor and the Hero

The second case worked on a relatively more complex text - *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* by Borges. The textual analysis I undertook focused on the style of Borges' fiction in general and how it works in this particular text. (Bloom, 1995; De Man, 1964; Evans, 1984; Macherey, 1978). The drama scheme I designed aimed to be truthful to Borges's original narrative in the form of participatory drama, and attempted to emulate a number of textual effects that reflect the author's idiosyncratic ideas on literature and

philosophy. Through a number of exercises, the teaching also tried to introduce the Borgesian view of time.

The key questions guiding the analysis in the teaching practice are:

- What are the effects of the drama exercise on facilitating the students to engage in Borges' original fictive narrative?
- What are the effects of the attempted dramatic translation of the Borgesian narrative in introducing the theme of the repeating, spiral model of time in Borges' story?
- To what extent has the drama challenged the students' 'horizon of expectation' on short story writing and enriched their understanding of literary fiction?

1.5.4. Issues Emerging From both Cases

Throughout the whole process of research, there were a number of issues in both of the cases that emerged from the drama work and teaching practice. I proceeded to analyse these, framing them as the following questions:

- How well did the drama exercises transfer the narrative techniques deployed in the two original texts that were intended to blur the boundary between reality and fiction?
- How does popular culture, especially film and TV series, appear to have affected the imaginings of time and history displayed by these young people? And how do these imaginings of the past appear to have shaped their understandings of these two literary works?
- In what ways did the temporary literary community established in the drama classroom affect students' understanding of and engagement

with the texts?

1.6 Research Methods

This research applied triangulation techniques for data collection, and a variety of research methods were used in combination (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007). Each case study in this project was a qualitative study using participant observation (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993) as a main form of data collection, followed by group semi-structured interviews (Stenhouse, 1978; Wellington, 1996) in order to understand the effects of the teaching practice and students' perceptions of the texts. A pre-questionnaire presented a brief impression of the students' reading habits, the current situation of their literary education as well as their attitudes towards the literary classics, reading and the teaching of literature that they had previously experienced. Certain issues were further investigated with students in subsequent interviews. The two components worked to provide a context for my teaching practice. Data emerging from each case were analyzed within an understanding of this social context.

The research methods were also conducted under Robert Stake's theory of *Emic* and *Etic* issues, the one emerging from questions we approach the study with and the other on those that emerge directly from the data.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis follows closely the structure of the project as it was conducted in practice.

Chapter 2 begins with a review of Marxist literary criticism, which is the theoretical foundation of the national curriculum in China. I present an

argument for the limitations of this approach as a theoretical framework to teach modernist literature with attention to the tradition of literary modernism and the current situation of how modernist literature has been taught in China. I then demonstrate the principles of the educational approach that I take, and the possibilities of using participatory drama for this educational purpose. (The particular work on drama translation and pedagogy based on the two teaching texts are presented in detail later, in Chapters 7 and 8).

Chapter 3 focuses on the curriculum movement of general education in China, and the humanistic tradition behind it. Here I provide a critical view of this tradition and develop my own, closely referenced argument concerning moral and aesthetic values in literary education.

The research approaches for each section of this project are presented in Chapter 4. The data from the pilot study are explained and analysed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 presents a dynamic context of the field work by analyzing data collected through questionnaire and interview, in order to investigate students' reading activities thoroughly within its particular setting.

Chapters 7 and 8 are lengthy and detailed, concentrating as they do on the presentation and analysis of the two cases studies, the first of these chapters attending to the story and workshop *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* and the second to the *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*. Each chapter includes a textual analysis of the original, a detailed description of the drama translation, and an analysis of the teaching practice with all five groups of students who participated in this research project.

Chapter 9 focuses on issues emerging across both of the cases and my conclusion is presented in Chapter 10. Here I evaluate the strengths and limitations of the project overall and discuss its implications for future practice in university education and the potential it offers for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review Part One

‘Never forget that in your classroom there will always be at least one student altogether your superior both in mind and in heart. Never forget, either, that there is, or shall be, in that classroom a second teacher far more important than you are: a great text.’ (Mack, 1983, p.8)

The full title of this research project is ‘Introducing modernist short stories through participatory drama to Chinese students in higher education’.

Influenced by the current general education movement in China (See Ch.3 for more details), this research aims to investigate an innovative pedagogy for the teaching of modernist literature to common readers studying in different academic fields in higher education.

This chapter constitutes the first part of my literature review and begins with a look at the current situation of teaching modernist literature in the Chinese education system. With a glance at the design of the Chinese national curriculum, I will trace the theories underpinning the current teaching principles and methods that have been widely applied in Chinese schools and universities (Marx, 1859; Eagleton, 1975; Lukacs, 1957, Benjamin, 1999, Wu, 2003). By reviewing relevant theories of literary criticism, especially

those concerned with literary development in the twentieth century (Bulter, 2010; Childs, 2007; Faulkner, 1977), I shall present an argument to explain the deficiencies in the current theoretical framework for teaching modernist literature in China. I will then outline a theoretical framework for reading and teaching modernist literature, not intended to exhaust all possible readings or to establish a perfect interpretive system, but to provide a different approach for a particular group of common readers, who have been immersed in a dominant literary horizon that impedes their ability to make sense of the complex texts of literary modernism. The principles underpinning the literary education conducted in this research are inspired by Leavisite criticism (Leavis, 1988), the notions of 'the common reader' (Woolf, 1984) and of 'intimate readership' (Booth, 1988), and the study of poetics (Jakobson, 2008; Culler, 1975; 1997). Moreover, my chosen form of pedagogy meant that the texts of modernist fiction had to be turned into the form of participatory drama; therefore, I need to attend to translation theories (Jakobson, 1959, Derrida, 1999; Venuti, 1995; Benjamin, 1999), reception theory (Iser, 1978; Fish, 1970; 1980; Jauss, 1970; 1982) theories of theatre audience (Langer, 1997), and studies on the rhetoric of fiction (Booth, 1983) and narrative translation; as well as the writings of O'Neill (1995) and Fleming (1997) that I have found informative on the practices of drama education.

2.1 The Current Situation

Since the education system in China adopted the Soviet model of specialization in 1952, Chinese education, especially higher education, has been very much focused on professional training and academic expertise

(Xing and Ng, 2013, p.4). Within such an educational environment, modernist literature has been rarely taught to students in higher education outside departments of literature. Turning to the literary education that students receive before they enter higher education, until the year 2000, the literacy textbook for senior high school students (People's education press version⁴) introduced four modernist texts: *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka; *The Mark on the Wall* by Virginia Woolf; Act Two of *Waiting For Godot* by Samuel Beckett; and the first chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez (Wu, 2009). In 2008, these four modernist texts were revised and reduced to three (*The Mark on the Wall* by Virginia Woolf, *The Book of Sand* by Jorge Luis Borges and *The Bucket Rider* by Franz Kafka). Furthermore, they are only included as part of the students' after class reading material and are marked as optional reading texts (2008). Zhong Fenghua, a literacy teacher in Hangzhou High School, one of the leading senior high schools in Southeast China, has said in interview that young people generally complain that modernist stories are "too obscure" and that the teacher's task of analysing the text and conducting the lesson is "extremely demanding" (Tu, 2012, p.c5).

As to higher education in China, the curriculum design of both regular disciplines and general education courses depends on a variety of contextual factors such as the institution's history, education objectives, and its future

⁴ The textbooks in Chinese have many versions. Because of the reform of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination in recent years, some main cities and provinces (11 in total by the year 2014) have been allowed to have their own higher education entrance exams. Under the exam-oriented culture in China (Xing and Ng, 2013) these cities and provinces use their own versions of textbooks to suit the needs of the examination. However, the People's education press textbook can be used across the country for the national exam, so this continues to be the most influential textbook.

development plans (Hu and Cao, 2013). However, Professor Wu Xiaodong (2003) from the department of literature in Peking University, the top university in China and well-known for its literature education, has published his lectures on western modernist fictions, which provides us with an insight as to how they are taught at the highest level. The title of his course was “Foreign Modernist Fictions in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction”. In the two autumn terms in 1997 and 2000, he included altogether the close reading of nine texts⁵ (four texts in 1997 and five in 2000). Wu’s book only transcribes his lectures without giving details of the students’ backgrounds, the results of his teaching or of any follow-up modifications or improvements. However, as an educator and a reader himself, Wu shares his opinions about the current situation. According to Wu, since modernist literature was introduced in China in the 1980s, Chinese academia as well as common readers have experienced a series of “reading fevers” for writers such as Kafka, Borges, Márquez and Kundera. But Wu argues that the “fever” has only ever been superficial, and suggests that the most important reason for this is “the complex and obscure form of modernist fiction...reading becomes a serious and painstaking ritual but no longer entertaining and enjoyable.” (2003, p.4).

In the opening session of his course, Wu Xiaodong informs his students that “literary education in China normally follows the reflectionist theory”, which has a “self-contained philosophy – underneath the surface of our lives there

⁵ The nine texts are *The Castle* by Franz Kafka, *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *Hills like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemingway, *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Jorge Luis Borges, *Jealousy* by Robbe Grillet, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera.

is a set of principles and truth, and great fictions uncover the principles and truth". Wu is critical of literary education in China for falling into a series of mechanical activities, such as summarizing the "theme", and attempting to provide formulae intended to reveal the ways in which "this text reflects ..., reveals ..., and informs us..." (2003, p.7). Moreover, he reminds students that the reflectionist approach to reading also forms a fixed way of thinking in general, but that modernist fictions "are no longer the reflection of life or history". When reading these texts, he suggests, students have to adopt a new literary horizon or even a new way of thinking, which is not easy after having been submitted to long-term training guided by the theory of reflectionism. Recalling his own experience of reading modernist texts, Wu admits that "I myself had to struggle a long time to fight with my (reflectionist) mindset" (ibid).

In the following sections, I will follow Wu's suggestion and trace the theoretical underpinning of this deeply rooted literary horizon, and review relevant theories on literary modernism in order to disclose its deficiencies for interpreting this particular literary movement.

2.2 Marxist Literary Education

2.2.1 The View of Historical Materialism

The reflectionist theory is, as Terry Eagleton puts it, "a deep-seated tendency in Marxist criticism" (1976, p.46). Therefore let us go back to Marx to see what role has been assigned to literature in the system of Marxism. In the Preface of *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859; 1993), Marx makes the following statement:

“In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”(1993)

In the system of historical materialism that Marx established, the material productive forces in a particular social stage determine the relations of production in society. With the development of productive forces, Marx argues that human society has been through different stages from primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, to capitalism, and will proceed to socialism. The sum of the dominating relations of production in each stage is the ‘economic structure’ or ‘economic base’ of this society, from which arises the ‘superstructure’ – a variety of forms of ‘social consciousness’, including law, politics, religion, philosophy, literature and art. The essential function of these higher activities, as Terry Eagleton explains, ‘is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production’, thus ‘superstructure’ is also designated by Marx as ‘ideology’ (1976, p. 5).

According to Marxist literary criticism, literature, as part of the ‘superstructure’ of a society, is analysed within its social and historical context. Therefore, Eagleton indicates that Marxist critics do not regard literature as works “mysteriously inspired”, nor do they analyse them in terms of the author’s “psychology”; the writing of literature becomes a “form of perception”, a way

that the author sees, reflects and interprets the world. In Eagleton's words, literary works "have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the whole which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of an age" (1976, pp. 5-6).

This historical materialist theory has greatly influenced literary education in China, especially the reading of western literature (Liu, 2010, p.55)

According to Liu Hongtao, a professor at Beijing Normal University who has conducted a national award-winning project on western literature, "western literature has been read as the manifesto of class struggle in Chinese schools". He points out that realistic works dominate the teaching texts in literacy textbooks. "It is an ideological concern," Liu explains, for realistic literature "criticises the sins of capitalist society" and "shows the truth that capitalism is doomed to fall" (ibid, pp.55-6). He cites the interpretation of *The Man in a Case* by Chekhov in the teacher's book to exemplify his point:

"Byelikov's unsocial behaviour, hypocritical nature, as well as his anxiety and fear demonstrate his aberrant personality and stubborn support of Tsarism. The story also reflects the change into a new life; the communist revolution is frightening Tsarism, the old society is doomed to die." (Cited in Liu, 2010, p.57)

Although in recent years, literary education in China has gone through a number of reforms, Liu argues that, the new textbooks still keep "criticising the darkness and the decay of humanity in capitalist society" (ibid, p.57).

2.2.2 Reflectionist Theory

Within such an educational context, reflectionist theory has generally been applied as the method of literary interpretation.(Wu, 2003; Liu,2010).Terry Eagleton provides a clear definition: reflectionism is based on the belief that “literature should teach certain political attitudes, assumes that literature does indeed (or at least ought to) ‘reflect’ or ‘reproduce’ social reality in a fairly direct way” (1976,pp 48-9). However, Eagleton also points out that the inadequacy of this formula relies on the “passive, mechanistic relationship” it assumes between literature and society, “as though the work, like a mirror or photographic plate, merely inertly registered what was happening ‘out there’” (1976, p. 49).

The concept of reflectionism used in Chinese literary education would appear to present a rough and superficial understanding in line with vulgar Marxist rhetoric. However, reputable Marxist critics like Lukács and Trotsky have presented more sophisticated interpretations of reflectionism. The intellectual origins of reflectionism in China can be traced back to Lukács, who provided its most mainstream ideas. Lukács claimed that true knowledge, which reflects objective reality but underlies its appearance, can be discovered through science and great art (cited in Eagleton, 1976, p. 47); but in his later works on Marxist aesthetics, he argued that artistic consciousness can be an active force as, to some extent, art (especially great art) is a creative intervention into reality rather than a reflection of it (ibid). Moreover, Trotsky suggested that art reflects reality in a more subtle and complex way.

Influenced by the Russian formalist theory of defamiliarization, Trotsky argued that the arts 'make strange' experience, that artistic creation reflects changes and transforms objective reality under particular aesthetic principles (ibid). Trotsky's viewpoint was developed by Macherey, who claimed that literature aims to deform reality rather than to imitate it (ibid). However, these Marxist critics share something in common - they all focus on a literary work in relation to its society for the social significance of superstructure lies at the base of Marxist criticism.

2.2.3 The Dangers of the Marxist Approach

I agree that Marxist criticism brings to the reader a coherent approach to help focus on the origins of literary works as well as their social significance. The problem in Chinese literary education is not Marxist literary criticism itself, but its unchallengeable authority, dominant status and mechanical application in the teaching and learning of literature. On the one hand, this dominant way of reading leads to readers having a single and limited literary horizon; on the other hand, over-emphasising Marxist principles or the social significance of literary works may result in overlooking their aesthetic value, misreading complex meanings and even jeopardising literature and literary education by reducing it to ideological instruction.

Nearly eighty years ago, Edmund Wilson (1937, pp 247-8) presented an insightful argument on the dangerous consequences of applying Marxist theory without real literary understanding.

Firstly, great literature embodies complex visions and sophisticated meanings in subtle and implicit ways, whereas a mechanistic Marxist reading

tends to seek for simple messages or social morals. Failing to grasp literature artistically can lead to confusion, especially when the explicit message or the moral that the reader finds – or is instructed to find - is the opposite of the real purpose of the work or has nothing to do with it.

Secondly, leftist Marxist critics always try to establish a diagram for what they consider to be the ideal of Marxist literature and use it as the standard to measure literary works. This attempt works “to legislate existing good literature out of existence and to discourage the production of any more” (Wilson, 1937, p. 248).

Finally, and most importantly, Wilson points out that the ideology behind such Marxist formulae serves a political end, which tries to “make of art an effective instrument in the class struggle” (ibid). It is true that, according to Marxist theory, superstructure can act as an active force, so art can be used as a weapon; however, to the greatest art works which have “the longest carry-over value”, it would be a great shame to trade such value off for their direct function as a weapon.

2.2.4 Literary Modernism

In this section, I turn to theoretical works on modernism pertinent to my research. These theories illustrate the literary innovations and experiments that modernist fiction has made, breaking the conventional frameworks of literary realism. They show how the new aesthetic system formed in the process of the modernist movement opened up perspectives on literary interpretation which reveal the deficiencies of reflectionist theory in teaching this particular school of literature.

Breaking up the Nineteenth Century Literary Consensus

Peter Faulkner opens his study on modernism by indicating that “Modernism is part of the historical process by which the arts have dissociated themselves from nineteenth century assumptions” (1977, p.1). Faulkner argues that in the nineteenth century it was generally accepted that literary form was closely related to a stable relationship between writer and reader. This relationship assumed a community in which writer and reader shared “a common reality”. Writers accepted that literature conveyed ethical enlightenment by sharing human experience and a reality common to a wide audience. The Victorian novels are the most obvious example of literature written under this literary consensus.

According to Faulkner, this consensus was broken up in the early twentieth century (Faulkner, 1977, p.24) when human civilization started to become more complex than in any previous era; two world wars, the great depression, the rise and fall of Nazism and communism, the discovery of nuclear power, and the psychological exploration of the human inner world - this infinite complexity became “the modernist writer’s fundamental recognition” (Faulkner, 1977, p. 14). Whereas nineteenth century literature tended to present an orderly world, this unprecedented complexity led the modern western world to become much less sure about its values and modernist artists more sceptical about the art forms they used. One could argue that great writers in any era will be acutely aware of the complexity of the world around them; but Faulkner explains that even the most sceptical writers in

previous periods would still unquestionably believe in certain things, such as human sensibility, human progress, or an overall moral law, whereas modernists' doubts went much further as the absolute truths of the past were replaced by relativism and subjectivity. Moreover, this scepticism expanded into how artists related to the art forms they used. Faulkner explains that writers like Pope and Dickens may well have expressed very different ideas about life and society in their works, but they never worried that the heroic couplet or the medium of the novel would fail to convey their ideas and visions thoroughly and powerfully. Yet modernists could no longer uncritically accept the existing forms of art; they felt the need to revolutionize their medium, which explains why so many innovations in narrative technique took place in the twentieth century (Childs, 2007, p.81). From this viewpoint, in a modern world where complexity and scepticism had become everyday experiences, it is unsurprising that nineteenth century literary conventions, built on assumptions of common experience and moral edification, would be challenged and found wanting.

Solitary: the Loss of Wholeness

Their experience of feeling as "outsiders" and their awareness of alienation made modernists, as Lukács observes, 'by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings' (1957, p.476). He argued that an individual's 'solitariness' was the 'specific social fate' of the modern world (1957, p.476). As a 'classical' Marxist, Lukács did not see this fact as a positive change and it is an important insight into the nature of modernism – the solitary, caused by modern capitalism, is characterized by fragmentary,

discontinuous sensations and, as a result, human 'wholeness' is lost in the new age (cited in Eagleton, 1976, p. 59).

As one of the greatest thinkers in the early twentieth century, Walter Benjamin also noticed changes in culture, society and art and provided many original and revolutionary ideas. In his celebrated essay *The Storyteller*, Benjamin (1999) indicates that the First World War crystallized the change in western civilization from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Previously, people used to receive and spread information locally, with their families and friends, and death, for example, led people to gather together to discuss the life of the person who was just deceased. Stories were told and experience was valued. After the Great War this world was transformed; people struggled to reflect accurately upon their experiences, and experience itself fell in value. Old communities were shattered by the impact of modern technologies and the art of storytelling, which is community-based, was replaced by more individualistic art forms in which he includes the novel.

The Storyteller is not a study on modernism but Benjamin's argument sketches a picture of the transformation of narrative and modes of reception characteristic of modern times and of great relevance to my research, as I believe his famous saying, broadly applicable to the novel, is also specifically pertinent to modernist writing:

"The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled and cannot counsel others." (1936; p.87).

Deficiencies in Marxist Literary Education

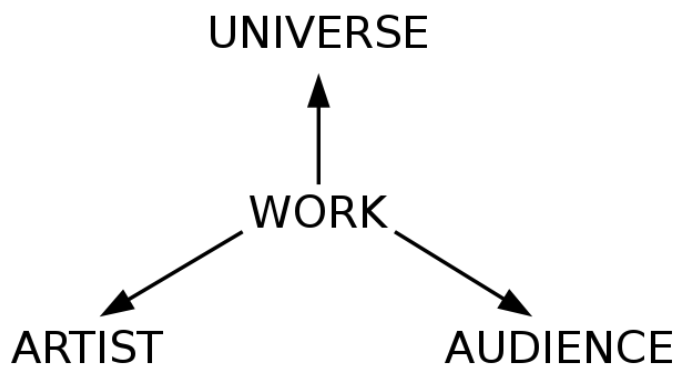
The complexities that find expression in modernist literature present a set of challenges to Marxist literary criticism and the reflectionist theory that underpins it. Marxist criticism suggests that literature 'reflects' or 'reproduces' social reality. Although Lukács attacked the passive, mechanistic analysis of literature and society, his argument was still based on the typical Marxist philosophy that certain principles underlie the appearance of objective reality, and on the belief that the key purpose of great literature is to reflect or uncover these principles. However, in Stephen Spender's words, "the principle of reality in our time is peculiarly difficult to grasp, and ... 'realism' is not an adequate approach to it" (cited in Faulkner, 1977, p. 15). The 'solitariness' of modernist artists facing a fragmentary world which has lost its sense of wholeness made it increasingly difficult for them to locate the truth and principles that might underlie this world that Lukacs (1957) argued they were trying to do; and, their attempts to integrate the principles of this fragmental world led to the narrative forms of modernist fiction becoming increasingly complex. This is a point, as we shall later see, particularly pertinent to the fictions of Borges.

2.3 A New Approach to Modernist Literature

In this section, I shall set up the theoretical framework for reading and teaching modernist literature that I adopted for this research project.

In *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), M. H. Abrams presents a brilliant classification of literary theories,

which presents us with various possibilities and diverse approaches to the reading of literature. Abrams argues that, in the total situation of a literary work, there are four key elements – first there is the work, the artistic product itself; second is the artist who creates the work; the third is what Abrams calls the universe, the subject which the work signifies or reflects upon; and finally the audience, to whom the work is addressed (1953, p. 4). Abrams presents the framework of the four elements in the diagram below (ibid):



The three arrows indicate three broad classes of literary theories which attempt to study literary works in relation to something else. Abrams names them as mimetic theories (work and universe), pragmatic theories (work and audience), and expressive theories (work and artist). In addition, there is a fourth class – objective theories - which tends to focus on the close reading of the work “in isolation, as an autonomous whole” (ibid).

Hence, we can see that the reflectionist theory mainly works on the relation between the work of art and the universe. It is true that Lukács’s point - that art is an active force or creative invention, as well as Marx’s argument on the function of ideology – to some extent relate to the relations between the work and the artist and the work and the audience. But their central tendency is to

focus on what Abrams calls the universe. Moreover, since the universe has different aspects, unlike some critics who focus on subjective feelings or imaginative intuition, Marxist criticism tends to focus on the material world. In other words, reflectionist theory, or the Marxist literary criticism used in Chinese education, does present one valid approach to reading literature, but it is only one approach, only one part of a broader spectrum of literary understanding.

Indeed, any literary theory will have its own tendency and none could cover all the elements above. My own attempt is not to replace reflectionist theory with something else for readers of literature but to enrich the colours in their spectrum of literary understanding. The approach that the reflectionist theory takes more or less overlooks the artist's own perceptions, thoughts and feelings, the interaction between the literary work and the reader, as well as the internal principles of literary art, which can be examined in isolation from the external world. In this research, I have selected two aspects that the reflectionist theory does not cover, namely the interaction between the literary work and the reader, and the internal principles of literary art. I shall now discuss the reasons for choosing these two approaches and the relevant theories that underpin them.

2.3.1 The Common Reader

My target students for the form of education I am promoting in this thesis are from different academic backgrounds and most of them would come to the class not as specialists in English literature. The characteristics of these

students match Dr Johnson's idea of the common reader as developed by Virginia Woolf.

In the preface to her book *The Common Reader* (1984), Woolf quotes Johnson's words

"I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours" (cited in Woolf, 1984, p.11)

Johnson and Woolf cherish the ideas and opinions of the common reader. They are aware of the common reader's deficiencies – their lack of literary knowledge, their hasty and often superficial reading habits - but they both place value on other characteristics. Johnson sees the common reader as "uncorrupted by literary prejudices", and to Woolf such a reader reads "for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others". (ibid) In other words, they value a non-utilitarian way of reading and a love of literature. From the perspective of a general education, the common reader exemplifies the objective that some educators work towards – the education of the whole person (holistic education) and learning that is both life-long and life-fulfilling.

2.3.2 The Company We Keep

To introduce a non-utilitarian approach to reading and a love of literature, I turn to the Leavisite tradition (1960) and reception theory to find the guidance I need for my teaching.

F. R. Leavis was against any mechanical approach to interpreting literature and believed that literature should be experienced instinctively and be focused on 'books that you live with and love, those that embody life' (cited in Bate, 2010: p.24). He did not initiate a formal theoretical system of literary criticism, but his theories were developed in the teaching of literature in higher education (Steiner, 1962). Throughout his whole career, Leavis gave witness to an idea that great literature is not just as an exploration of life or values, but an affirmation of the possibilities of life. In *The Great Tradition*, he provided his famous statement on this idea.

"It is necessary to insist, then, that there are important distinctions to be made, and that far from all of the names in the literary histories really belong to the realm of significant creative achievement. And as a recall to a due sense of differences it is well to start by distinguishing the few really great - the major novelists who count in the same way as the major poets, in the sense that they not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of that human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life." (Leavis, 1960, p.10)

Following in this tradition, Jonathan Bate has provided insightful advice into reading as 'a dialogue with the dead' (Bate, 2010: p.25). Bate claims that reading activity is a mixture of imitation, absorption and resistance to the text, as if in conversation with the author. It is not a passive way of being informed, but a positive and creative communication with a great mind. Bate indicates that once its affect has been re-enacted by a reader (such as a young person

who reads a Shakespeare sonnet to her lover), the literary text will come alive and ‘the words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living’ (Bate, 2010: p.27). Through this kind of dialogue, the sophisticated literary work becomes ‘the company we keep’ (Booth, 1988). In this research, I aim to pioneer a way of building up an intimate friendship between young people and complex modernist texts. The long-term aim of such teaching is intended to cultivate passionate readers who in their future lives can claim to have a genuine love of good – and in this case difficult - literature.

2.3.3 Studying Form

To this end, I would like to introduce to the common reader a basic knowledge of poetics (Culler, 1997; Jakobson, 2008). Poetics, according to Jonathan Culler, is an approach that ‘starts with attested meanings or effects and asks how they are achieved’ (1997, 62). Culler proposes that the study of literature has overwhelmingly taken the approach of hermeneutics, which takes *form* as a point of departure and works towards seeking *meaning* out of texts. This is also the approach that reflectionist theory takes. In this research, I wished to combine hermeneutics with poetics. Since modernist literature greatly challenged the conventions of realism and naturalism, especially in terms of narrative form (Childs, 2007, p.81), some basic approaches from poetics may provide practical strategies for the common reader to make sense of the narrative challenges that such literature presents.

2.4 Participatory Drama and Modernist Short Stories

Literary texts, especially narrative fictions, have been used in drama education for many years and influential drama educators such as O'Neil (1995) have illustrated how to adapt literary works as 'pre-texts' to process drama. However, as a 'pre-text' the work is seen more as a springboard for a shared, drama experience rather than as a text for scrutiny and study. In other cases, for example, Winston (2000, 2004), drama educators who make use of stories do so for reasons different from my own, for example for the purposes of language learning or moral education. As for my own specific area, I can find no precedents. Therefore, I have drawn my theories not from literature on drama education but from other fields, namely translation studies (Jakobson, 1959; Derrida, 2001; Venuti, 1995; Benjamin, 1999), reception theory (Iser, 1978; Fish, 1970: 1980; Jauss, 1970; 1982) theatre audience theory (Langer, 1997), and the rhetoric of fiction (Booth, 1983). These works have informed my approach to translating the narrative form of modernist fiction into drama, whereas the writings of O'Neill (1995) and Fleming (1997) have informed me on the subtleties of using participatory drama and on how to structure it as pedagogy.

2.4.1 Teaching Texts

Since my discussion of drama pedagogy is closely related to the teaching texts themselves, I shall explain the reasons why I chose the two stories *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* by the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, and *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*, by the French writer, Marguerite Yourcenar.

Both texts differ greatly from the principles and concerns of nineteenth century realism yet both offer a pathway into exploring complex issues relating to time (Borges) and beauty (Yourcenar) that I hoped would interest, challenge and engage the students I worked with. In terms of form, the Borges story, in particular, offers distinctive challenges for students in terms of narrative structure and discourse, which I nonetheless felt I could engage with through dramatic means. In choosing *Wang-Fo* as one of my texts, I was aware that, as a modernist text, it would be relatively accessible for my target students. Here I was following the advice of Wu Xiaodong (2009) who specifically recommends this story as teaching material for students being introduced to modernist literature. “it is a fairy tale set in ancient China, very similar to *The Magic Paintbrush*⁶ and not hard to read. Such readable texts are a very good choice to cultivate young people’s interest in reading modernist works.⁷” (2009, p.7).

2.4.2 Translation

My first teaching task was to turn the original text of the modernist short story into the form of participatory drama. This involved the need to address a number of questions: How could I change the narrative form of a modernist short story into the narrative form of participatory drama? How could I manage to be as faithful as possible to the author whilst having to make

⁶In *The Magic Paintbrush*, Liang, a poor orphan boy, is granted a paintbrush by an old man, which can turn everything Liang draws into reality. The greedy emperor arrests Liang and forces him to paint a money tree. Liang draws it but in the middle of the sea. The emperor takes a dragon boat to sail to the money tree, and Liang draws a storm which drowns the emperor in the sea. I have previously co-authored an article which examines the Marxist elements of this tale. See Winston et al (2010)

⁷ In this chapter, Wu also chose a story by Borges, *the Book of Sand*, the other two texts being *the Hungry Artist* by Franz Kafka and the first chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez.

difficult compromises with the narrative? And, in the case of *Traitor / Hero*, How could I make a story with so different a cultural context accessible to young people in China? During this process, I acted as an agent, negotiating between different languages, cultures, narrative discourses and literary horizons. The teaching strategy crossed so many boundaries, that I have applied Roman Jakobson's (1959) concept of 'translation' to frame all these concerns.

In his widely cited essay *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, Jakobson introduced the viewpoint of semiotics to look at translation, encouraging it to be studied as a much broader system of signs than those limited to the territory of the verbal. Moreover, he offered three categories for interpreting a verbal sign:

- “1. Intralingual translation, or rewording, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
- 2. Interlingual translation, or translation proper, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
- 3. Intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.”(1959, p.114)

Intralingual translation is undertaken within the same language; such as the word 'wealth' can be translated into 'riches, affluence'; interlingual translation is switching one language into another, which is the kind of translation we normally refer to; intersemiotic translation is translating a verbal or literary

text through the use of a nonverbal system of symbols. For example, Rodin's monumental sculpture the *Gates of Hell* is a particularly brilliant intersemiotic translation of Dante's *Inferno* (Rodin et al., 2006). And if Ted Hughes's version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Ovid & Hughes, 1997) is a text of interlingual translation (from Latin to Modern English), the stage adaptation by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1999 at the Swan Theatre (Hughes et al., 1999) was a critically acclaimed intersemiotic translation of Hughes's interlingual translation.

In my research, I translated the two short stories, which are verbal texts, into classroom drama. The adaptation and teaching is basically an intersemiotic translation. However, intralingual and interlingual translations also had their place in this project. First, the two short stories were originally written in Spanish and French. Due to my shortcomings as a linguist, the materials that I refer to (including the stories and relevant studies) are confined to the languages English and Chinese. Thus, I became both a receptor and a participant of interlingual translation. Since my intersemiotic translation was based upon Chinese versions, all my adaptations and teaching, also conducted in Chinese, can be viewed as intralingual translations. So, although I will mainly focus below on intersemiotic translation, certain issues concerning intralingual and interlingual translation will also be addressed.

2.4.2 The Principles of Translation underpinning this Research Project

The Translator's Task

Equivalence or fidelity has been commonly referred to as one of the key primary issues when people discuss translation. Normally in the activity of

translation, people tend to regard the original as the unquestionable authority.

Yet both literary criticism and translation studies have challenged this taken-for-granted notion. As Benjamin informs us, the relationship between the original and its translation is not one of a superior to its subordinate, but one that shares a more intimate, natural and vital connection (Benjamin, 1999).

Translation is not a counterfeit constructed from another language, aimed at imitating something as closely as possible. Benjamin claims in his essay *The Translator's Task* that "no translation, however good it may be, can have any significance as regards the original" (Benjamin, 1999, p.71). Then what is the task of a translator? Benjamin raises a notion of "the life, and continuing life, of works of art". He argues that translation proceeds from the original, but not so much from its life as from its "afterlife". In other words, a translator should work for the purpose of continuing the life of the original. Translations "do not so much serve the work's fame as they owe their existence to it. In them the original's life is constantly renewed and achieves its latest and most comprehensive development"(ibid).

Unapproachable Absolute Fidelity

Echoing Benjamin's point, Jacques Derrida states that translation is "a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself in enlarging itself" (cited in Venuti, 1992, p.7). For Derrida, the absolute, faithful translation does not exist, for translation is far beyond "word for word" translation, but a "sense for sense" translation on a cultural level. Derrida claims that 'no translation strategy can be linked deterministically to a textual effect, theme, cultural discourse, ideology, or institution.'(Venuti, 2001, p.172)

The best translation possible is what Derrida calls “the relevant translation” where the act of translation participates in an “economy of in-betweenness”, positioned somewhere between “absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency, and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance” (ibid, p. 179).

The Illusion of Transparency

Relevance is not a new concept but a popular theory in translation studies in the twentieth century. According to Venuti (1995), it derives from a criterion dominant in English-language translation studies – fluency. Being aware that absolute fidelity is unapproachable, most translators aim at a fidelity of the spirit and the tone, to render the text so that it does not seem to be translated at all, but is as smooth as if written by the author in the target language.

Venuti describes such an effect as ‘the illusion of transparency’ – “an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator’s efforts to ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning” (1995, p.1).

Hence, under the influence of the principle of fluency, Eugene Nida set up the concept of “dynamic equivalence”, which “aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture” (1964, p.159). Ernst-August Gutt’s “relevance theory” is also useful here. He argued that the translator of foreign texts should take the receptor’s “cognitive environment” into consideration and minimize their “processing effort”, therefore offering a translation that is

“clear and natural in expression in the sense that it should not be unnecessarily difficult to understand”(1991, p.102).

One important feature of the theories above is that the effect of ‘transparency’ is based upon minimizing the foreignness in the original text by assimilating it into the linguistic structures and cultural context of the target language. Such attempts can be rather controversial. Walter Benjamin points to how some translators commit a “fundamental error” here, quoting Pannwitz: “the translator...holds fast to the state in which his own language happens to be rather than allowing it to be put powerfully in movement by the foreign language” (cited in Benjamin, 1999, p.73). Instead of offering a fluent translation to minimize a reader’s “processing effort”, it might be more challenging but more useful, therefore, to broaden and deepen students’ literary understanding, challenge their institutional knowledge of literature, through the importation of the foreign.

Like Benjamin, Derrida was acutely aware of the fluent, easily readable, and “transparent” text that ‘relevant’ translations put so much effort into producing. Although Derrida admits that the “relevant” translation is an inevitable aim, he thinks that adhering to “the illusion of transparency” may be risky as it “leads the reader to believe that the signified has been transferred without any substantial difference” (Venuti, 2003, p.248).

The Principles underpinning the Participatory Drama Translation

Informed by the translation theories reviewed above, I established a set of principles for the translation from the two modernist short stories into participatory drama. First, the participatory drama would not aim for ‘absolute

fidelity' to the original text, but to serve the 'afterlife' of the original, offering a renewed reading experience in the language of drama in an attempt to make the original story achieve a constant and comprehensive development within another context. In other words, the translation worked to keep the original text alive, and to invite the reader to engage with it.

Second, the translation process was approached as a 'growing out from' the original, the drama translation becoming an organic work shaped by the original text, growing from within it.

Third, the two modernist short stories are both complex texts in terms of content and form but it would not have been impossible to diminish the difficulties and turn them into 'smooth', 'transparent' adaptations to suit students' expectation and thus minimize their 'processing efforts'. However, it would have harmed the style of the originals and would have stopped the reader from investigating the innovations integral to modernist literature. As a result, the purpose for conducting this research would have been lost.

In the next section, I will refer to further relevant theories in order to discuss how I translated the two short stories into participatory drama in terms of narrative and point of view. (Since modernist texts are innovative in many different ways, I have not attempted to draw up a general formula here.

Details specific to the translation of each story are presented in Chapters 7 and 8, following a detailed textual analysis of each.) In addition, below I will rely on reception theory and writings on theatre audiences to discuss how I used participatory drama as pedagogy to engage students with the two texts.

2.5 Translation of Narrative

The transformation from literature to drama is not a simple process. Like two different species, literature and drama have their own skeletons and organs. The obstacle in the way of adapting a work of narrative fiction into a play, as O'Neil indicates 'exists in the nature of narrative structure which obeys very different laws from those of drama'. (1995, p.40) Reproducing such a work into a play literally will not necessarily cohere with the internal nature of drama. Hence, I shall here outline the different narrative structures of literary fiction and drama.

2.5.1 Memory and Destiny

"Narrative is a...doubly temporal sequence...: There is the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative' (the time of the signified and the time of the signifier)... More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme." (Metz, cited in Genette; 1980; p.33)

According to Christian Metz, narrative is a mechanism that deals with time, therefore the study of the different narrative functions of fiction and drama can be elucidated by considering how they work with time. Here Suzanne Langer proves to be most helpful. She writes: 'literature creates a virtual past, drama creates a virtual future. The literary mode is the mode of Memory; the dramatic is the mode of Destiny'. (1953, p. 307) Past and future, memory and destiny, are the four words that frame my argument below.

The art of narrative fiction, according to Langer, is essentially the art of memory, which narrates in the mode of remembrance and meanwhile reproduces the memory in a creative way. The remembrance of the writer is not merely a repeating of the past, but an activity of awakening the fragments of memory and projecting them through words. During this process, writers narrate retrospectively (ibid).

Different from the narrative of literary fiction, drama is an art of 'now'. Langer argues that 'its (drama's) basic abstraction is the act, which springs from the past, but is directed toward the future, and is always great with things to come' (ibid, p.306). From her perspective, one can see that drama is under the double gaze of both past and future. So it is endowed with a unique tension, which derives exactly from the specificity of 'immediacy'. Drama is pregnant with things unknown. To be present means to be in suspense; "the form of suspense," as Langer suggests, 'is the illusion of Destiny itself that is given in drama, and that arises chiefly from the way the dramatist handles circumstance'. (ibid, p. 309) In other words, drama is a great seducer that can lead audiences into a particular kind of emotional tension, under which is raised the sense of destiny.

The main act of translation that I performed in this project was between the two narrative modes. As Heathcote suggests: 'stories suggest diachronic time unfolding from past to present, while drama demands synchronic time, a dramatic present, ...as the web of interaction within the frame of a selected environment and event'. (Cited in O'Neill; 1995, p.40) Nevertheless, it does not mean that transformation or adaptation is impossible. Modernist short

stories and drama, after all, both deal with time, although modernist writers – including playwrights such as Beckett – are particularly obsessed with time and innovative in their treatment of it. Basically, what my translation needed to do was to put the ‘past’ into the moment of the ‘present’ and to suspend ‘memory’ under the control of ‘destiny’.

2.5.2 Telling and Showing

Apart from the concept of time, narrative effects can also be influenced by the tendency, the attitude, and the perspective of the narrative voice, namely its ‘point of view’. “The most important differences in narrative effect”, as Booth suggests, “depend on whether the narrator is dramatized in his own right and whether his beliefs and characteristics are shared by the author”. (1983, p.151)

Through the lens of the ‘point of view’, narrative can be distinguished into two forms: narrating from the perspective of the writer’s authorial view; and speaking through the voices of the characters. In addition, although narrative fiction can provide several different points of view, only one can be present at any one time. Writers can transfer the perspective from one character to another but all of them cannot be shown at the same time. Lodge claims that ‘even if it adopts an “omniscient” narrative method, reporting the action from a God-like altitude, it will usually privilege just one or two of the possible points of view from which the story could be told, and concentrate on how events affect *them*’. (1992. p.26)

Drama, however, is different. All the impressions that the audience receives are from a series of acts. Unlike literary fiction, whose aim is to *tell* a story,

theatre tends to *present* one (Lodge, 1992, 122). Dramatists have no voice to describe or comment on their creations and audiences have only the period they spend within the theatre to know the story from what these creations say and do'.

However, the discourse of narrative fiction also alternates between “*showing* us what happened and *telling* us what happened”. The purest form of showing is direct speech and that of telling is authorial summary.

(Lodge, 1992, p. 122) In narrative fictions, telling and showing often mix together. Moreover, as Booth indicates: “since Flaubert, many authors and critics have been convinced that ‘objective’ or ‘impersonal’ or ‘dramatic’ modes of narration are naturally superior to any mode that allows for direct appearances by the author or his reliable spokesman”. (1983, p. 8) The common reader will find it easy, then, to follow limited viewpoints offered through either the author’s voice or the perspectives of a few main characters. Participatory drama can become an ideal form for emulating these different viewpoints. Fleming suggests that presenting alternative perspectives is a “pragmatic as well as an aesthetic” technique in this form of drama and “in its simplest form is very accessible to pupils” (1997, p.14).

2.6 Reception Theory

In Alan Bennett’s play *The History Boys*, there is a famous classroom scene, in which Hector, the teacher, reviews Thomas Hardy’s poem *Drummer Hodge* with Posner, a talented and sensitive boy in his class. Through such a close reading, the teacher and the student recognize their mutual loneliness

and their shared connection with the author and his work. At this moment, Hector speaks the most unforgettable lines of the play:

The best moments in reading are when you come across something (a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things) that you'd thought special, particular to you ... and here it is, set down by someone else, a person you've never met. Maybe even someone long dead. And it's as if a hand has come out and taken yours.

Hector's reading of Hardy's poem is not a translation (certainly it is a transmission of knowledge) yet it exemplifies the principles of translation that I argued for above. It is dealing with the 'afterlife' of the text, a growth from the original, is intent on enriching and completing the life of the poem. He puts his own life-experience and the love of words into the text, feels the feeling of the author, and shares his thoughts, engaging with his student.

This scene can be regarded as an artistic interpretation of reception theory, or reception aesthetics, a term that has sometimes been used to refer to reader-response criticism in general. Reception theory positions the reader's role at the centre of literary interpretation, examines the reader's response towards the literary work and focuses on the interactive relation between the reader and the text. For the specific concerns raised by my research, I shall mainly focus on the theories of three important critics from this school –Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss.

2.6.1 The Role of the Reader

Before the rise of reception theory, the role of the reader had long been “underprivileged” (Eagleton, 1983, p.74). Reception theory stresses the importance of the reader in literary interpretation by studying how the reader makes sense of the texts. Stanley Fish, is one of the most influential theorists who championed the idea of the reader’s role. In *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics*, Fish claims that the reader should be regarded as an “actively mediating presence” and taken “fully into account” (1970, p. 123). Traditionally, literary critics had tended to ask the question - “what does this sentence mean?” However Fish shifted the emphasis to “experience what this sentence does to you” (1970, p. 125), believing that literary interpretation is a dynamic process, which should not end up as a “declarative statement” (1970) but become the reader’s developing response as it happens during a process that demands her active participation.

2.6.2 Subjective Interpretation

According to Fish’s reader-based theory, it is pointless to try to achieve a ‘true’ meaning of the text. Fish argues, “I would rather have an acknowledged and controlled subjectivity than an objectivity which is finally an illusion” (1970, p. 146). To Fish, the meaning of the text is produced by the reader’s “interpretative principles and strategies” (Newton, 1992) even with regard to what are supposed to be the objective parts of a text, such as rhyme and metre. In Terry Eagleton’s

(1983) words, Fish's critical attention is not the objective structure of the literary work itself, but the structure of the reader's experience, and he does not believe that in literature there is anything 'given' or 'determinate'.

2.6.3 Interpretive Community

The reader's interpretive principles and strategies in Fish's theory are derived from the concept of an 'interpretive community' (Fish, 1980).

Fish argues that the meaning of a text depends upon a set of cultural assumptions. Since the reader belongs to an interpretive community with a certain cultural context and value system, she has been provided with a particular way of reading when she interprets a literary text.

2.6.4 Horizon of Expectation

Fish's notion of interpretive community has a parallel with the concept of 'horizon of expectation' introduced by Hans Robert Jauss (1970). Jauss also believed that the reader approaches a literary text with pre-existing expectations about the theme, structure and style. But unlike Fish, who took a socio-cultural perspective, Jauss's concept of a 'horizon of expectation' was formed by two facets of reception – aesthetic and historical implications:

The aesthetic implication is seen in the fact that the first reception of a work by the reader includes a test of its aesthetic value in comparison with works that she has already read. The obvious historical implication of this is that the appreciation of the first reader will be continued and enriched through further "receptions" from generation to generation; in

this way the historical significance of a work will be determined and its aesthetic value revealed. (1970, pp. 8-9).

2.6.5 Horizon Change and Aesthetic Distance

The right and freedom that Fish permits the reader may seem to risk arbitrary interpretation to some extent, and in fact Fish's theoretical views have been criticized for being based upon "extreme relativism and even radical subjectivism" (Nussbaum, 1985). Unlike Fish, Jauss focuses on the chemistry that happens in the interaction between the text and the reader. The reader may approach the text armed with knowledge about literary techniques or conventions, but those expectations may well be answered by the text in unexpected ways. In Jauss's words: "The way in which a literary work satisfies, surpasses, disappoints, or disproves the expectations of its first readers in the historical moment of its appearance obviously gives a criterion for the determination of its aesthetic value" (1970, p.14). He calls such a result a 'horizon change'. The act of reading becomes a journey. The distance between the horizon of expectation and the text, between a pre-existing aesthetic experience and a horizon change, is called 'aesthetic distance'.

Jauss's argument is derived from his study on the history of literature. He states: "a literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period" (1970, p.10). Like other critics of reception theory, Jauss is deeply concerned about the perspective that the reader brings to literary interpretation but he does not view literary interpretation as a single-direction activity from the

reader to the text, rather as an interactive dialogue between literary works from the past and the reader of any different era. Any individual can approach a literary text with her own particular horizon of expectation; but by going through the process of aesthetic distance and completing a horizon change, her aesthetic experience can be enriched and improved by great literature. This is an educational process that not only emphasizes reading as an act of active understanding rather than passive reception but also serves to explain the seemingly inexhaustible vitality of great literature from generation to generation.

2.6.6 Implied Reader

The Implied Reader is a term that Wolfgang Iser proposes in *The Act of Reading* (1978) and *The Implied Reader* (1974). Iser does not believe that there is only one correct way to read a literary text, nor does he agree that the meaning of literature derives from the subjectivity of the reader. 'The implied reader', according to him, is not an actual reader but a "structure inscribed in the texts" (1978, p.60), the "internal structure of the text" (Eagleton, 1983, p.84) that makes so many different interpretations emerge through the act of reading. The implied reader is a collective of possible readings of the text, rooted in the structure of the text itself; and the act of reading by various actual readers is the process by which the implied reader reveals certain aspects of her features. In Iser's opinion, the reader is not granted with unlimited freedom to interpret as she wishes, however. Literary interpretation is to some extent constrained by the text itself. Each literary work sets up a degree

of determinacy, which governs the reader's response to the text and keeps the interpretation away from total anarchy (Eagleton, 1983, p.85).

2.7 Drama Experience as Reading Experience

Because of the difference of medium, reading experience is very unlike drama or theatre experience. Reading is an individual and private experience, whereas drama is a group or communal experience. An investigation of drama through the lens of reception theory can offer us insights into the potential strengths of participatory drama as a way to teach modernist literature.

2.7.1 Audience Participation

In the history of the theatre, 'audience participation' has always played a crucial role. From a practical viewpoint, as Bennett argues, "the survival of theatre is economically tied to a willing audience". (1997, p.4) From the artistic and aesthetic perspective, "the audience has been acknowledged as a creative aspect of the dramatic process" (ibid). Bennett sees the audience as co-creator rather than mere passive addressee of drama. As Meyerhold suggested, 'we produce every play on the assumption that it will be still unfinished when it appears on the stage. We do this consciously because we realize that the crucial revision of a production is that which is made by the spectator'. (1969, p.256)

In participatory drama, students join in actively with the drama exercises, which in my case were based on a literary text. This breaks the conventional form by which literature has been taught, emphasizing the

role of the audience/ reader/ student. Reading is no longer a passive perception or solitary experience, but an interactive communication with the text, the teacher and other readers.

2.7.2 A Drama Community

Fish (1980) sees the interpretive community as a set of social and cultural assumptions that may affect the reader's understanding of the text. And Jauss (1970) brings into consideration the reader's preceding experiences of reading. Drama establishes a community in which every reader/ student can contribute their ideas and opinions about the texts *as they unfold*. Even though the implied reader (Iser, 1978) is not an actual reader, during a process in which different readers from varied backgrounds and with different literary experiences share their understandings of a text communally, a plurality of possibilities of interpretation suggested by the implied reader may be more likely to emerge. Although the reading of the text cannot be exhausted, each individual reader's reading experience could be informed and enriched by the process of this shared experience.

Chapter Three

Literature Review Part Two

Within the Context of General Education

The literature review in this chapter focuses on a number of issues within the context of the general education movement in China. As discussed in the Introduction, this pedagogical movement, taking place in many Chinese universities, potentially provides an opportunity for using participatory drama to aid the teaching of literature in higher education. In this chapter, I will review the objectives of this programme, its curriculum design and pedagogical approaches. I will also trace its origins and the tradition of liberal arts education in which it is rooted (Nussbaum, 1990; 1995; 1997; 2010). By reviewing Martha Nussbaum's notion of 'cultivating humanity' and Richard Posner's discussion on literature as edification, I will in effect be considering the promises, challenges and potential illusions that attend this research project.

3.1. The Rise of General Education in China

Nowadays higher education in China is very much specialized. Literature, like other subjects in liberal arts such as language, philosophy and the arts, is only systematically taught in particular departments and institutions (Xing and Ng, 2013). In recent years, universities with privileged educational resources have set up 'courses for general education' for all undergraduate

students to pursue in addition to their major curriculum. In September 2000, Peking University, the top university in China, opened 150 optional courses for general education. Leading colleges such as Tsinghua University and Fudan University quickly followed suit (Hu and Cao, 2013).

Hu and Cao (2013) have studied the growing trend for 'general education' in China and conclude that this initiative is modelled on the Ivy League Universities in the United States, where the idea of 'general education' is defined as "a classical, literary, scientific, and comprehensive education that provides a comprehensive and complete knowledge base for professional training" (Packard, cited in Hu and Cao, 2013, p. 62). Nowadays it is also referred to as 'liberal arts education' (Hu and Cao, 2013, p. 63).

Liberal arts education, as AAC&U (the Association of American Colleges & Universities) defines it, is:

"A learning methodology that enables individual learners to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It...teaches students a sense of responsibility and helps them to gain strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem solving skills, and to demonstrate a capacity to apply knowledge and skills to the real world." (cited in Hu and Cao, 2013, p. 63).

Historically, liberal arts education has been central to education in the western world. In 1854 in Great Britain, John Henry Newman published his influential essay *The idea of a University*, in which he suggested that the mission of higher education was not to pass on practical knowledge but to

provide a classical liberal arts education to aid rational thinking and promote self-education (Hu and Cao, 2013; Newman, 1854). Newman's ideal of a university was inherited from the tradition of classical humanities education and went on to have a wide impact on higher education globally. Liberal education has become a crucial part of undergraduate education in the United States and nowadays, courses such as 'western civilization' and 'great books to guide reading' have become core curriculum for undergraduate students in top American universities (Hu and Cao, 2013, p.62).

3.2 The Reason for Introducing General Education in China

In Chinese universities, general education programmes have been introduced to address perceived problems in the current system of higher education. According to the handbook for general education provided by Peking University: "the main problem of current undergraduate education in China is caused by the highly specialized curriculum design, which fails to provide students with a broad knowledge background" (2008, p.1). General education aims to introduce interdisciplinary modes of education across multiple academic fields. Alongside academic expertise, students should also gain a number of abilities, and according to the handbook, Peking University states that this idea of general education is "not teaching students professional skills but developing students' self-learning and knowledge-creating abilities." (ibid)

Perhaps Peking University's handbook states things in a rather reserved manner, but in *Not for Profit*, Martha Nussbaum (2010) is more forthright in

her critique of 'highly specialized curriculum design' and its worrying consequences. Nussbaum argues that, influenced by global business culture and turbo capitalism, liberal arts education has been viewed as 'useless' by politicians, and is being replaced by technical training courses for the purposes of economic gain. Unlike the initiative shown in Peking University, the trend today is for liberal arts programmes to be cut at all levels of education around the world. Nussbaum contends that, although practical skills may be important for national economic growth, they are not able to produce the kind of fully educated citizens necessary for a democratic society. In her words, without liberal arts education, the younger generation will grow up as technically trained "useful machines", rather than "complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements." (2010, p.2). In fact, according to some informed commentators, Nussbaum's worry has already been proven by the younger generation in China. Qian Liquan, a reputable professor of Chinese literature in Peking University, made a widely quoted statement at the conference of 'the ideal university' in 2012:

"The universities in our country, including Peking University, are training a group of 'sophisticated egoists'. They are smart, worldly, and good at acting and leveraging the institutional rules for their personal agendas. Once they get into power, they will cause more harm than any amount of corrupted government officials." (cited in Xie and Du, 2012)

In his interview for the *Southern Weekly*, Qian states that many people in the younger generation are only concerned with how to live a pleasant life as easily as possible, and show no ability or desire to critique matters of social and moral value. To avoid risk in their lives, they adopt the dominant value system without doubt or hesitation. Qian expresses his worry that these young people with their “cold, mechanical personalities” will easily be tamed into a group of “mindless people, willing to submit to authority at any time” (cited in Zeng and Yuan, 2012).

3.3 What Can Drama Do?

General Education in Chinese universities has normally been conducted through elective courses, open to all undergraduates, the curriculum design seeking to provide a knowledge-based, interdisciplinary model across multiple academic fields. The modules often take the form of traditional lectures, introducing foundational rather than specialized knowledge (Hu and Cao, 2013). However, education researchers (Xing and Ng, 2013) have also found that not only in China, but in the Greater China Region including Taiwan and Hong Kong, academic departments are struggling with the teaching of these general education courses. Students come to the classes from different departments, from “a broader range of academic backgrounds, with more divergent motivation and varying engagement levels”. Therefore, general education courses “may demand pedagogical adjustments for instructors”. (2013, p.7)

However, this challenge that Chinese institutions are currently struggling with was actually turned into a strength by the new pedagogy developed in the

OSL. In 2006, the CAPITAL Centre started a programme with Warwick English undergraduates who were taking a compulsory module in Shakespeare. CAPITAL applied theatre performance skills and rehearsal techniques to facilitate students to engage actively in the learning of Shakespeare. The innovative teaching pedagogy transformed the traditional academic lecture or seminar. Teachers, students and practitioners, including writers and dramatists, worked in the same rehearsal room, organized as “a group of collaborators to investigate Shakespeare’s text”, the rehearsal room providing a “shared space”, which established a community “making individuals responsible for particular ‘knowledge’ that they would then own collectively.” (Monk, Rutter, Neelands and Heron, 2011, p.12-3)

This interdisciplinary model of mutual practice was not intended to replace traditional educational formats but to complement them. It sought to explore the potential for teaching and learning across the disciplines and, according to the research and student feedback, the CAPITAL programme achieved positive results (ibid).

The teaching philosophy of OSL may provide a precedent - or at least a reference point - for Chinese institutions’ demands for pedagogical adjustments. Like the CAPITAL Centre’s Shakespeare project, Chinese universities could design interdisciplinary elective courses around literary texts open to all students, especially those from outside a literature department, from backgrounds such as history, philosophy, arts, natural sciences and business. Each participant could be responsible for contributing to the learning community from their particular perspectives, personal

experiences and academic expertise. What OSL could provide to literary understanding is not only a physical, shared space, but a space that could host a group of learners with different literary horizons; and in this space each reader/participant's literary horizon, and their understanding of the text, could be informed and enriched by those they learn alongside.

3.4 What Can Literature Do?

The technically trained 'useful machines' in Martha Nussbaum's words, and the 'sophisticated egoists' in those of Qian Liqun both serve to remind us of the "Utilitarian spirit in Victorian education" (Leavis, 1960, p 260) presented by Mr Gradgrind in Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times*. Jonathan Bate suggests that Gradgrind "sought to extirpate children's capacity for wonder, for poetry and imaginary play, in order to prepare them to become factory hands, mechanical cogs in the wheel of Victorian capitalist production" (2010, p.24).

In *The Great Tradition*, F. R. Leavis (1960) admired *Hard Times* above all the other Dickens's novels (Bate, 2010, p. 23), for the mechanical education in Gradgrind's academy vividly explains the importance of the kind of humanities education that he passionately extolled, in which great literature should be studied for its potential to influence individual lives and change society for the better. I have discussed Leavis's approach to the study of literature in the last chapter, but in this section I will attempt to align the humanist values of Leavisite criticism with the ideas of Martha Nussbaum, whose neo-Aristotelian ideas on the importance of an education in literature

have been influential but in which I see potential problems for my research project.

3.4.1 Literature and Human Life Experience

In *The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought*, F. R. Leavis (1975) compares Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with Dryden's *All for Love*. By analysing the superiority of Shakespeare's play, Leavis puts forward his humanistic view of literary appreciation. He argues that Shakespeare has a "marvellous power of realisation", that there is in Shakespeare's art "a life corresponding to – bound up with – the metaphorical life" and the reader "becomes aware of it as sensitive variation" (1975, p.24). Leavis is here, in effect, insisting that aesthetic values and moral values are inseparable, and that literature (principally he is referring to English literature) as a discipline "should form the spiritual centre of the university" (Newton, 1992, p.10), as the study of literature can become a "life-changing, and potentially social-changing experience" (Bate, 2010, p.24).

Being "implicitly" linked to Leavisite criticism as she claims (1990, p.190), Martha Nussbaum demonstrates the central precepts of this humanistic literary criticism: that literature deals with "human lives" and "speaks about us" (1990, p. 171). It does not work as a "philosophical example" (1986, p.14) but as a way to help us access finer moral perceptions. Furthermore, great literary works, she argues, are "moral achievements on behalf of the community" (1990, p.167), essential to the community identity of people who wish to live together and share a conception of virtue. (1986, p.14).

Nussbaum believes that literature provides a way in which one's moral perceptions can be tested, explored, modified and improved. She does not simply use literature as the context for moral or philosophical explanations – “interpreting a tragedy is messier...than asserting a philosophical example” (1986, p. 14), but, supporting a “practical criticism”, by which she means “the intense scrutiny of particulars” in a text (1990, p.148), she argues that the reading of literature (especially novels) is equivalent to the reading of life. Literary imagination offers us an experience of life. Although it is not the reader's own life, it “places us in a moral position that is favourable for perception and it shows us what it would be like to take up that position in life” (1990, p.162). Great literature in Nussbaum's argument sets up the “elucidation and assessment of someone else's complex position” (1986, p.11). Instead of giving a didactic moral lesson, literary narrative allows the reader to see and to feel each particular individual as who they are. More importantly, experiencing literary imagination does not lead the reader to fixed conclusions but is process that leads her to consider various particularities and to question them over and over again. In Nussbaum's words, it provides a “perceptive equilibrium” (1990, p.171), which encourages us to make the “effort to see” (1990, p.185) building up, in the process, a “dialogue between perception and rule” (1990, p.157).

This dialogue between perception and rule is open to everybody. The ‘rule’ in Nussbaum's argument is a sort of universal value. Nussbaum indicates that literary works reflect “problems about human beings”, which “philosophical texts might be able to omit or avoid” (1986, p. 13). Since literature is concerned intimately with human lives, Nussbaum reckons that its ultimate

aim is to define a “we”, a “conception of virtue” that everybody shares as a community experience.

Emotional Response and Identification

But how can one set up such a dialogue? As a neo-Aristotelian thinker, Nussbaum’s approach is influenced by Aristotle’s view of classical Greek tragedy – that art aims to evoke pity and awe. She points to the importance of emotional response and its relation to cognitive value and ethical reasoning; during the reading activity, “we discover what we think ... partly by noticing how we feel’ (1986, p. 15). Through identifying with the characters, the reader enacts the story internally, and it is this that develops an emotional response which leads the literary text to matter significantly to the reader at the end of this process. In *Love’s Knowledge*, Nussbaum’s reading of *The Golden Bowl*⁸ provides an example of such a process. She writes: “we carefully follow Maggie. Seeing the world through her intelligent eyes, we hardly notice that we ourselves are rapidly becoming as distant from Charlotte, and as blind to the inner pain of her life, as Maggie herself” (1990, pp. 144-5).

As a philosopher who is also steeped in literature, Nussbaum wants to introduce literature, which embodies real life situations, as the “ally” of philosophy in “the war on moral obtuseness” (1990, p.161). Emotional response evoked by literature, she believes, can provoke a wider intellectual

⁸ In the *Golden Bowl*, Maggie the young wealthy American girl marries an impoverished Italian prince. However the prince is secretly having an affair with Maggie’s friend, Charlotte, who is not wealthy. Maggie finds out about the relationship and manages to separate the pair through delicate diplomacy and wins her husband back. Nussbaum reckons that this story can be viewed as a woman’s experience of growth.

response to complex moral issues than can philosophy on its own. In *Love's Knowledge* (1990), Nussbaum suggests that Greek tragedies and Anglo-American realistic novels can be regarded as moral philosophy. Later in *Poetic Justice* (1995), she makes this point more concrete within the context of public life, arguing that the reading of novels “develops moral capacities without which citizens will not succeed in making reality out of the normative conclusions of any moral or political theory, however excellent” (1995, p.12). Within such a theoretical framework, it is easy to understand her passionate defence for a liberal arts education in our profit-oriented world. For her, imaginative literature has a great potential to impact on an individual's participation in public life and can act as a force to help maintain healthy democracies.

3.4.2 The Aesthetic Outlook

I admit that Martha Nussbaum makes persuasive arguments about the significance of liberal arts education, especially literary education, which echo the agenda of general education programmes in Chinese universities. Her theoretical position is, however, open to challenge and I am drawn to the writings of some leading critics who share different opinions about the relationship between literary works and moral values. In fact, my own theoretical framework is derived from Harold Bloom's aesthetic view of literary reading and from Richard Posner's critique of Nussbaum's arguments.

How Moral Standards Affect the Evaluation of Literature

As we have seen, one key feature of Nussbaum's theoretical framework is that she combines literary aesthetics with moral philosophy. Nussbaum uses literature to complement moral philosophy without ignoring the significance of its aesthetic values. She is aware of the wholeness of literary works, of how literary style "makes its claims, expresses its own sense of what matters. Literary form is not separable from philosophic content, but is, itself, part of content – an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth" (1990, p. 3). However, Richard Posner points out that although Nussbaum values aesthetic values, she is "prepared to trade them off against the moral" (1998, p.308). According to Posner, Nussbaum's consideration of form or aesthetic value is overly intent on serving a moral end, a pursuit which is basically an attempt to find good quality work in order to "extract a moral lesson" (ibid). Therefore the moral values in a literary work inevitably affect Nussbaum's evaluation of the text. In other words, her concern for aesthetic values in literature is determined by its capacity to act as a vehicle to carry her moral philosophy.

In *Poetic Justice*, Nussbaum demonstrates how *Maurice* by E. M. Forster and *Native Son* by Richard Wright can act as texts to evoke our sympathy towards homosexuals and African Americans. However, it is arguable that neither of these are good examples of high aesthetic achievement. *Maurice*, according to Posner, is Forster's "weakest novel, with all the earmarks of special pleading" (1998, p.321). As for *Native Son*, Posner quotes Harold

Bloom: "Wright, in *Native Son*, essentially the son of Theodore Dreiser, could not rise always even to Dreiser's customarily bad level of writing" (cited in Posner, 1998, p.322). Posner questions why Nussbaum did not choose *Othello* as her racial text, as Shakespeare's play is undoubtedly a much superior work. Indeed, Nussbaum is free to make her own choice according to her own standards, but the problem, as Posner reminds us, "may lie in the politics of education and public advocacy in our multi-ethnic society" (1998, p. 323). Great writers, he points out, are "never completely safe, especially Shakespeare" (1998, p.324). Nussbaum's choice of works appears to be determined by her concerns as to whether or not the themes of those literary texts are "liberal", whereas great literary works, such as Shakespeare's plays, go beyond any ideological categories. Shakespeare's greatness, as David Parker suggests, "lies in the fact that, whatever univocal insights or affirmations may be expressed within any work, they are thoroughly dramatized - that is, set within a complex interlocutory process such that they are never the 'final vocabulary' of individual works" (1995, p.60).

Friendship

Nussbaum's edifying reading of literature is based upon an assumption that great literature can dramatise complex situations, especially the key moral dilemmas of human life, which is indeed the ambition of many writers. No complex moral dilemma has an easy solution, of course, and Nussbaum, as an elite intellectual, is fully aware of this. That is why she refuses to use literary works as didactic texts for preaching tidy moral values, but indicates that the influence of great literature on people's mind and action is more

diffuse and subtle. The 'dialogue between perception and rule' (1990, p.157), in her argument, provides us with an open discussion, which will not lead to any fixed answer or conclusion. And along with Booth (1988), she compares the reading of imaginative literature to friendship, since the influence of a friendship on someone is rather complex and uncertain but not unimportant.

I do not disagree with the analogy between reading and friendship. In Ch.2, I have discussed the significance of building up an intimate 'friendship' between the text and the reader from a literary aesthetic viewpoint as well as a pedagogical perspective. However, in the context of moral edification, I doubt that such 'friendship' would make the reader more moral or cultivate citizenship for a more democratic society. Like many people who love literature, I have great sympathy with the idea of being a friend with an author and with their literary characters. But a reader's common sense makes me ask – are our literary 'friends' really performing morality plays for us? Is that why I am friendly with them? Are they educating us in moral values or actually helping us to forget about them? Does the immoral villain have no friends? How influential can such a friendship be on a reader's actions and behaviour?

Poetry makes nothing happen

The silliest way to defend the western canon is to insist that it incarnates all the seven deadly moral virtues that make up our supposed range of normative values and democratic principles.

(Bloom ,1995, p.29)

Instead of subscribing to a view that sees the educational value of literature as some kind of social catharsis, this research project takes Harold Bloom's (1995) aesthetic view on the purpose of studying literature as a key guiding principle. In his most celebrated work, *The Western Canon*, Bloom writes an elegy for the literary masterpieces of western civilization. He claims that as a literary critic he is experiencing the worst of times, because both contemporary academia and higher education have imposed on literature too many cultural functions and social responsibilities, whereas the aesthetic seems to have been neglected. The romance of reading is dying; a poem is not read as a poem anymore. Although Aristotelian scholars are on the side of defending the canon, Bloom does not regard them as allies but asserts that literature "should not become a basis for democratic education or for societal improvement" (1995, p.17). As one of the most well-read people in the twenty-first century, he uses his erudite knowledge to persuade us that, since Homer's time, western classics such as the *Iliad*, Dante's and Milton's epic poems, and Tolstoy's and Dostoyevsky's novels have never been good choices for moral lessons since they are all full of violence, revenge, slavery, racism, and sexism. Even Shakespeare's politics, he quips, "do not appear to be very different from those of his Coriolanus" (1995, p.29). In Bloom's view, great literature resists being reduced to moral philosophy, for great writers subvert all values in the world, including their own, and a mature reader should be ready to suspend her moral judgement whilst reading their works.

The Aesthetic Tradition

Bloom stands in the aesthetic tradition. The aesthetic view of the moral purpose of literature, as Posner outlines, can be described as follows: firstly, reading literature cannot make the reader a better human being or a better citizen. Being well-read does not grant you any moral superiority over philistines. The behaviour of Germany in World War II, described as one of the most cultured of nations, would seem to demonstrate that any such simple belief in the edifying function of literature is merely a Victorian piety. Secondly, a work of literature should be valued according to its aesthetic achievement rather than its ethical content, even if the author seems “to share monstrous moral views. The moral in literature should be regarded as the author’s raw material, like the sculptor’s clay. Finally, our valuation of the literary work must not be affected by the author’s moral reputation and opinions (Posner, 1998, pp.306-7).

The Individual Self

The separation of moral and aesthetic values, which Bloom and Posner support, is based upon an understanding that the aesthetic is not a social but an individual concern. From a professional literary critic’s point of view, Bloom insists that “the individual self is the only method and the whole standard for apprehending aesthetic value” (1995, p. 23). By quoting Dr Johnson – “The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit” (cited in Bloom, 1995, p.28) - Bloom suggest that a strong poem will insist on its own self-sufficiency and will refuse to be contained (ibid). On the

other hand, Posner, from a legal theorist's perspective, reminds us that advocating the moral function of literature would not necessarily help to improve democracy but could risk intervening into the private sphere. In a democratic society, it is necessary to distinguish culture from the state, what is private from what is public. "By assigning to literature the function of promoting sound moral (including political) values, it associates literature with a public function, such as the inculcation of civic virtue. By doing this it makes literature an inviting candidate for public regulation, and thus contracts into the private sphere." (1998, p.314)

However, this aesthetic viewpoint is not celebrating a moral vacuum. On the contrary, the aesthetic tradition has its self-contained moral system, which is focused on 'the individual self'. Posner argues that "the aesthetic outlook is a moral outlook, one that stresses the values of openness, detachment, hedonism, curiosity, tolerance, the cultivation of the self, and the preservation of a private sphere - in short, the values of liberal individualism" (1998, p.307).

Becoming what we are

Instead of seeking answers for "how should I live?" as literary ethics does, the aesthetic tradition supports the belief that literature helps us to become what we are. Through reading, we become interested in the characters and situations that capture aspects of ourselves and our own lives. Immersion in literature helps us to develop self-understanding as well as an understanding of other human beings. To such an extent, the aesthetic seems to echo Nussbaum's social catharsis. However, their disagreement relies on a different understanding of 'empathy'. The aesthetic tradition believes that

empathy is amoral. Thinking from other people's perspectives might help us to understand another's pain and misery, but also might improve our skill in manipulating others for our own selfish purposes. As Nehamas reminds us, 'To be able to see the world from another's point of view may be the greatest weapon one can wield in a war against that other.'" (1996, p.27)

Thus I choose to follow the aesthetic tradition, which pictures literary understanding as an image of individual thinking. By reading literature, the reader explores the real 'individual self' by experiencing different characters and situations. If we are open to the boundless choices of friendship that literature offers us, the mind through which we learn to see the world may be the mind of a Hamlet, a Macbeth, a Coriolanus or a Richard III. If you do not believe in the glory of war, Yeats' poem *Under Ben Bulbin* will not make you cry out: "Send war in our time, O Lord!" But by reading it you can come to understand your own mind and clarify your own values.

Bloom regards the canon as the foundation for human thinking, and he positions Shakespeare at the centre of the Western Canon. His passionate argument on Shakespeare's greatness also explains, for me, the reason why we read good literature:

"Shakespeare will not make us better, and he will not make us worse, but he may teach us how to hear ourselves when we talk to ourselves. Subsequently, he may teach us how to accept change, in ourselves as in others, and perhaps even the final form of change"

(1995, p.31)

Chapter Four

Methodology and Field Work

4.1 Introduction

This research intends to explore the possibility of using participatory drama to introduce western modernist short stories to Chinese students in higher education. The whole project was conducted in three parts with six groups of students in Beijing, China, and in Warwick University in the UK. The project design included a pilot study, intended to establish some brief understanding of the target students' literary outlook, reading habits and their perceptions on one modernist text, as well as on the use of drama pedagogy. I undertook this with a group of postgraduate students at Warwick. This was followed by two case studies which used different modernist texts – *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* and *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*. The entire work on each of these stories constituted a single case, and I conducted both cases with the same five groups of students in Beijing and at Warwick. In Chapter 2, I examined the principles of translation as they related to my practical pedagogy. The specifics of this practice will be attended to in Chapters 7 and 8, as part of the two case studies. Here, I shall concentrate on the overall methodology of my fieldwork.

A pilot study was important to this study and performed two purposes: 1) it provided some basic knowledge as to the literary understanding and reading habits of my potential target students; 2) it tested out my proposed drama pedagogy. Informed by the knowledge I gleaned from this, the main part of

the project was conducted in two parts. Part 1 focused on ‘the research context’ – establishing an overview of the participant students’ literary appreciation as well as their reading tastes and habits. Part 2 – the major part of the research design – took the form of two case studies which were intended to explore the effects of trying to introduce students to these difficult texts through participatory drama. The two components – Parts 1 and Part 2 – were intended to work organically, to present one entire study, conducted with five different groups of college students both in Mainland China and in the UK during the period 2012-15.

I shall begin by looking at how my pilot study influenced the rest of the research and then discuss the theoretical underpinnings of my research approach, before concentrating in particular on the research methods that I applied. I will attend in detail to each individual part of the project in order to explain the use of the particular methods and how they affected data collection and other aspects of this project.

4.2. Pilot study

4.2.1 Overview

In June 2012, I conducted my pilot study with ten Mandarin speaking students from the MA in Drama and Theatre Education, in the Avon drama studio at the University of Warwick. I chose one of the two stories *Theme of the traitor and the hero* as the teaching text and led a three-hour drama workshop. I deliberately chose this text because it is comparatively more complex and challenging than the other and I anticipated that more problems

might emerge during the process, which my future research would benefit from.

I worked as both researcher as well as teacher here, taking the form of case study as my methodology. I applied observation, including audio-visual recordings, and interview as my research methods. Although I could have used questionnaires to gather data on the students' reading habits and literary thoughts, the information I obtained from the interviews proved to be sufficient for my purposes and also corresponded to the responses I had observed during the drama activities.

4.2.2 What I learned from the Pilot Study

The Chinese Context

Based upon a study of relevant literature, this research begins with the hypothesis that current college students in China have been taught literature in such a way that Marxist literary criticism, especially reflectivism, has been dominant in forming their literary imaginations. My teaching principles and the design of the drama pedagogy were derived from this hypothesis. Just as the meaning of language depends on its context, the effectiveness of the text adaptation and the drama sessions in this research depended upon its ability to address the Chinese literary educational context effectively.

The students' responses in the pilot study confirmed my hypothesis. Moreover the results also showed that many of them were lacking in their knowledge of both literature and history in key areas that are part of the expected levels of attainment in the Chinese secondary school curriculum (for more details, please see Ch.5). Consequently, some of my teaching

failed as it was built upon assumptions that the students would possess levels of knowledge that they evidently did not.

I was perfectly aware that the results from this small group should not be generalized to apply to any broader population. However, the experience did provide useful suggestions for the main research:

- 1) Research should be based upon a brief understanding of students' knowledge base and literary horizons, not only because they directly affect the teaching strategies, but also for the purpose of data analysis – students' feedback in the session needed to be analysed with due attention to the background of their previous literary understanding.
- 2) The ambition of this research needed to be moderated. Instead of trying to introduce difficult skills of text analysis, I became more focused on helping students to engage with the text at some personal level and on inspiring them to feel some intellectual curiosity for it. Meanwhile in my future research design I needed to lower my expectations and avoid asking students questions that would reveal an embarrassing lack of knowledge on their part.

A touch of Action Research

The pilot study revealed the extent of the challenge I faced in translating complex short stories into participatory drama, and the importance of my taking full account of the students' knowledge context if the teaching was to be successful. Due to the difficulty of the texts and the varying contexts of the five different groups, my teaching needed to develop and improve each time I taught the workshops.

In addition, research methodology, as Simons suggests, can learn from the concept of 'artistry' (cited in Winston, 2006: p.45). The fieldwork of this research was conducted with different groups in different institutions. With the changes of participants and contexts, I needed to adapt the project design to fit each particular group, and the data and findings of the work with previous groups was able to inform the next. As Winston suggests, 'We craft our methodology to pursue our aims, evaluating and re-evaluating it, adapting and refining as we proceed' (2006: p.45). In this research programme, working on the same text with five groups did not equate with unreflectively repeating identical drama workshops. During the whole process, I was able to learn from the deficiencies of my teaching strategies and questioning and improve upon them in the subsequent workshop. The journey was rather like trying to perfect a piece of art and, in this broad sense, it had elements of action research to it (Efron and Ravit, 2013; Baumfield et al, 2012).

4.3 Case Studies

The key methodological approach to this research project was not action research, however, but case study. Case studies have been well theorised in particular by Stake (1995), Yin (2003) and Simons (2009) and in drama education they have been promoted strongly by Winston (in Ackroyd, ed. 2006). As with literary texts, case studies imply that we can learn through close attention to particularity rather than always attempting to discover broad and universal social laws. What matters is that the case is examined and described in such a way that its analysis and discussion is seen to be

believable by readers who have knowledge of the context and practices under consideration. I am naturally drawn by its stress on artfulness and by the way in which theorists such as Stake and Simons draw upon literary sources to make their theoretical arguments as to the kind of useful knowledge it provides – knowledge that attends to detail and nuance and that is not afraid to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty. As with good art, it illuminates rather than explains away issues of humanity and social reality, which is one of Winston’s key points (2005).

The consideration of the two cases is informed by contextual factors derived not only from the pilot study but also from the questionnaires and interviews that I constituted Part 1 of my project. Part 2, the main section of the research, consists of the two case studies. For the sake of convenience, I have categorized the two cases under the titles of the two stories at their heart. Case One, therefore, is referred to as *How Wang-Fo was Saved* (or ‘Wang-Fo’ for short), and Case Two as *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* (sometimes abbreviated to ‘Traitor/Hero’).

The two cases shared the same five groups of students, but due to students’ timetables, some of them were able to attend only one workshop. I list the details below.

Case Two 15 hours in total, 3 hours each group

Group 1,

20 students, a group of First Year undergraduate students in Beijing Opera Art’s college

Venue: dance studio, Beijing Opera Art's college

Dates: October 20, 2012

Group 2.

20 students, a group of Second Year undergraduate students in Beijing Opera Art's college

Venue, dance studio, Beijing Opera Art's college

Date: October 20, 2012

Group 3.

7 students, a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students from Beijing Normal University

Venue: multi-media classroom, Beijing Normal University

Date: November 10, 2012

Group 4.

7 students including 5 postgraduate students from the MA Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University, one postgraduate student from Warwick Manufacturing Group and one postgraduate from Warwick Business School

Venue, Avon Studio, Westwood Campus, Warwick University

Date: June 3, 2013

Group 5.

8 students including, 4 postgraduate students of the MA in Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University, 3 postgraduate students of Drama and English Language Teaching at Warwick University, one postgraduate student studying classical music.

Venue: Teaching Room, Westwood campus, Warwick University

Date: May 4, 2015

Case One: 15 hours in total, 3 hours each group

Group 1,

15 students, a group of First Year undergraduate students in Beijing Opera Art's college

Venue, dance studio, Beijing Opera Art's college

Dates: October 27, 2012

Group 2,

13 students, a group of Second Year undergraduate students in Beijing Opera Art's college

Venue, dance studio, Beijing Opera Art's college

Dates: October 27, 2012

Group 3,

9 students, a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students from Beijing Normal University

Venue, multi-media classroom, Beijing Normal University

Date: November 3, 2012

Group 4,

7 MA students of Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University

Venue: Avon Studio, Warwick University

Date: May 28, 2013

Group 5,

10 students including, 4 postgraduate students of Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University, 5 postgraduate students of Drama and English Language Teaching at Warwick University, 1 postgraduate student studying classical music.

Venue: Teaching Room, Warwick University

Date: April 27, 2015

4.3.1 Part One

Part 1 mainly focuses on investigating the students' reading habits and tastes, their impressions of the literary education they received at school, their basic opinions on literary interpretation / understanding, and their interest in literary adaptations (especially plays/ films/ TV adaptations). The research methods used were questionnaire and interview.

4.3.1.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used at the very beginning of the teaching with each group. Wilson and McLean summarize the strengths of collecting survey information as 'providing structured data', and 'being straightforward to

analyse' (cited in Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007: p.317). From this viewpoint, one can see the questionnaire as a functional approach for quantitative research or standardized data collection. In this research, I included 15 questions in a 'Likert scale form' (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007: p.253; O'Toole, 2006: p.120) in order to measure students' answers as points on a linear continuum. The students were asked to choose whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire. In this way I conformed to what O'Toole insists that a Likert scale questionnaire provides, seeing it as a 'way of measuring perceptions, judgements, attitudes and opinions or tastes as points on a linear continuum' (2006: p. 120).

Facts and opinions

The 15 statements in the questionnaire were as follows:

01. I like reading narrative fiction.
02. The literary education I received at school was boring.
03. I do not re-read fictional texts.
04. I like to watch plays/ movies/ TV adaptations of literary works.
05. Once I know the plot, I won't be bothered to read the original text.
06. Pleasure is the most important thing I get from reading.
07. I find some literary works are difficult to understand.
08. When I read a fiction, I am more interested in the storyline than in its style of writing.
09. I prefer classical literature to popular fiction.
10. The stories and characters in the best classical literary works are still

relevant to our everyday lives.

11. Good literature teaches us how to become a better human being.
12. I like some of the villains in fiction because they are attractive and interesting.
13. I would like to experience some characters' lives by acting them in a performance.
14. Sometimes I feel I would like to have a conversation with the author or the character even if he/ she is long dead or never existed.
15. Knowing the socio-historical background of the text helps me to understand it.

Denscombe indicates that 'The information from questionnaire tends to fall into two broad categories-“facts” and “opinions”' (2007; p.155). 'Facts' require no judgment or attitude but provide straightforward information, whereas 'opinions' aim at gleaning respondents' feelings towards the issues being inquired into. For this research project, the 'facts' I tried to obtain pertained to the students' reading habits and tastes (See questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9). For example, questions 1, 5 and 8 focused on their interest in fiction and story, especially questions 5 and 8 which tried to elicit their preferences between plot/ storyline and style. Question 9, the choice between the canon and popular fiction, was intended to give a general idea about the reading texts the participants might choose. And question 4 was intended to reveal their interest – or otherwise - in dramatising literary works. Their 'opinions' were sought in questions 2.4.6.7.9.10.11.12.13.14.15. These included their ideas about the pedagogies used or that could be used in literary education; for instance, their thoughts about dramatising literary works (question 4) and

introducing dramatic elements into teaching (question 13); whether or not they liked the literary education they had received at school (question 2); and more importantly, their viewpoints on literary appreciation, such as what they thought about the aesthetic and moral values in literary works (questions 6, 11, 12), the relationship between fiction and real life (questions 10, 11, 15) and the relationship between literary works and the reader (questions 6, 7, 10, 11, 14).

Questions on Modernist Literature

I have to clarify that in the questionnaire I deliberately did not posit any questions on modernist literature. According to Cohen, Morrison and Manion's instructions for questionnaire design, the researcher "should avoid making questions too hard" and "consider the readability level of the questionnaire" (2007, p.334). Indeed, all the students in this research project had a university level reading ability but, according to the feedback from my reading and my pilot study, college students in China generally seemed to have a very limited knowledge of modernist literature (See the analysis in Chapter 6 for details). In addition, Wu Xiaodong (2003), the professor of literature in Peiking Chinese university and the editor of literacy textbooks for secondary schools, reminds us that modernist literature is a particular blind spot in Chinese literary education; and due to the difficulty of modernist texts, common readers, and even students from departments of literature, generally feel that modernist texts are difficult or even impossible to understand.

Indeed it would have been possible to pose questions to find out ‘facts’ about the students’ reading experiences of modernist literature and their ‘opinions’ on these texts. However, to people who have no idea about modernist writers such as Kafka, Proust or Joyce (the pilot suggested that most college students might well have only heard of their names, something I discuss in Chapter 6), asking them whether or not they had ever read those writers’ works could become quite irritating for them (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007, pp 334-5). I was further influenced by Wu against asking them their opinions here. Groupthink or prejudices about modernist literature, as expounded by Wu (2003), led me to believe that their feedback to a statement like ‘I cannot figure out what those modernist writers are trying to say’, or ‘I think reading modernist literature is pretentious’ would be unlikely to produce useful data.

As a result, and perhaps paradoxically, the questionnaire I designed for researching the teaching of modernist texts had no question specifically on modernism in order to avoid making the questions either too complex or too remote from the students’ experiences. But some questions were specifically designed to reflect the students’ thoughts on modernist literature from another angle. For instance, question 7 asks if they thought some literary works too difficult, which more or less showed the students’ attitude towards complex texts that might include modernist literature. And questions on the aesthetic and moral values in literature, fiction and reality, readership and modern technology’s influence on reading (question 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15) are all about changes in literary appreciation that have been pertinent since the rise of modernism.

4.3.1.2 Interview

Non-probability sampling

The first stage in preparing an interview is to sample a group of interviewees. Wellington recommends non-probability sampling because of 'the intensive nature of interviewing' (1996, p.21). He explains that in small-scale research 'probability sampling is often impossible to achieve'. I chose a few students from each group, the number being around five. Although the probability of including all the particular samples could not be guaranteed, it was a pragmatic choice in this research.

Semi-structured interview

Another issue concerns the degree of structure for the interview - structured, unstructured or semi-structured? I applied the 'general approach' (Wellington, 1996; p.27), that is a semi-structured interview since this permits the interviewer to retain a certain amount of control whilst remaining flexible and is comparatively less predetermined than a structured interview.

I also took Cohen and Morrison's (2007) advice; that, as all the topics needed to be discussed, possible questions ought to be posed about each topic, and that prompts and probes for each topic or question also needed to be included. For Part One of this research, the main topics were: 1) the deficiencies of current literary education and students' literary horizons when interpreting modernist literature; 2) the balance between form and meaning,

aesthetics and morality in literary education. Based on the two topics, I asked interviewees' a number of questions.

01. Do you read books very often? If so, how long do you spend on reading a book?
02. Who is your favourite writer or what is your favourite book?.
03. Can you describe the literature classes you had at school (secondary, senior high or even university)? Are you happy with your literary education? Why?
04. Do you think the socio-historical background is important to your literary understanding? Why?.
05. Do you judge characters in stories or the author of a book from a moral perspective? Why?.
06. What kind of book do you find very difficult? What exactly do you struggle with?

Questions 1, 2 and 6 were focused on the interviewees' interest in reading and literature. Question 3 was intended to investigate the current situation of literary education in China and students' feelings about it. Question 4 was using an important factor – socio-historical background in the reflectionist theory - to test students' literary horizons and the influence of Marxist literary criticism on their literary understanding. These five questions thus served to inform the first main topic.

Question 5 tried to explore the role of moral and aesthetic values in students' standards for evaluating literary works. Due to the flexibility of the semi-structured interview, according to students' feedback to this question, a

number of relevant questions would follow, such as: do you like characters who are morally ambiguous, or even bad, and why? Is there anything in fiction that you feel unacceptable in a moral sense? If a work is morally offensive, can you still enjoy reading it for its aesthetic value?

For the same reasons explained in the last section, I did not ask students any particular questions on modernist literature. But from the information they provided in the interview, I did encourage them to talk about their understanding and feelings of reading modernist literature if they had had certain relevant reading experiences. For example, to Question 6, some students in Groups 3 and 5 mentioned they could not make sense of works by Franz Kafka, García Márquez, and Milan Kundera, so I asked them to talk more about the exact difficulties or challenges they faced. Their answers to some extent reflect the deficiencies of the reflectionist theory on interpreting modernist literature. For example, Vera, a female student in Group 3, told me that the half-real and half-fantastical storytelling in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* made her very confused, “I can’t decide to read it as a fantasy or a proper novel.” Another female in the same group shared her experiences of reading *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka.

Eva: I found the story completely bizarre! How come a real human being suddenly transforms into a giant insect? How come his family just accepts it and no one even thinks of taking him to a hospital?

These responses are, of course, examined properly in the analyses chapters later in the thesis. Moreover, with Groups 4 and 5, I focused my attention more on introducing the idea of ‘the fictional’ and had by then improved certain drama exercises, which tried to show students how modernist

literature blurs the boundary of the real and the fictional (See Ch. 9 for more details of this). And I always remained aware of the five types of questions to avoid in interviews (Anderson, Cited in Wellington, 1996) – double-barrelled questions, two-in-one questions, restrictive questions, leading questions and loaded questions.

Group interview of students

The five students from Groups 1 and 2, and six from Group 3, four students in Group 4, and six students from Group 5 were interviewed in small groups. Interviews with Groups 1, 2, 4 and 5 were conducted one day after the teaching; with Group 3 the six students were interviewed immediately after the teaching had finished. Interviews are an in-depth research approach, which is comparatively time-consuming. Small group interviews can save time. In this research, each of the group interviews took approximately twenty minutes. Small group interview has many advantages. In addition, a group interview creates a more relaxed atmosphere. As Wellington argues, in small group interviews ‘the interviewees may feel safer, more secure and at ease if they are with their peers...They are also more likely to relax, “warm-up” and jog each other’s memories and thoughts’ (1996: p. 30). It potentially leads to a more fluent conversation and the interactions between interviewees can also inspire other interviewees to refine their answers. For example, in Group 3, I interviewed six students together. To the question - Do you think socio-historical background is important in your literary understanding? - the first two both answered yes and explained the reason that literature reflects its historical era. But the third opened up a new perspective.

Lucy: it really depends. If you read romantic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, the socio-historical background is really not that important.

The first two students were persuaded and wanted to change their answers. But Lucy's answer was challenged by another student.

Sally: Even with regard to fantasy, it still helps. Knowing something about England certainly helped me to imagine Harry Potter.

However, a small group interview has its potential disadvantages. Wellington reminds us about 'the maverick voice or the long monologue; dominant individuals who may monopolise the interview or invisibly "threaten" the others by their presence' (1996; p.30). But to some extent, such disadvantages can be rectified by the interviewer. As I mentioned above, a semi-structured interview offers more control to the interviewer (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007). I strove to make sure every interviewee had more or less an equal opportunity to speak, to reduce the answering time of the dominant voices and to encourage the ones who were not confident to talk.

4.3.2 Part Two

4.3.2.1 Case Study

Part 2 constitutes the main body of this research project, which, as we have seen, consists of two case studies. Case study is, according to Stake, 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995: p. xi). I

have previously explained my predilection for case study but there are several specific reasons why I saw it as my most suitable methodology.

1) Teacher as Researcher

The research of education, as Lawrence Stenhouse claimed, is 'applied' research rather than a 'pure' inquiry, since it aims at 'the support of educational acts' (1980: p.75). It serves the purpose of improving educational practice through providing better understandings, and it also requires that the research must be conducted within educational settings. From this viewpoint, he saw teachers as the ideal researchers for they can act as practitioners of both education and educational research, and advocated that case study was an approach that enabled teachers to play to their strengths. My research project was clearly in the area of 'applied' research and aimed to serve a specific educational purpose. Although not an experienced teacher myself, I conducted the drama teaching all by myself and collected data through different methods as a researcher during the process of field work. The whole process allowed me to be 'integrally involved in the case' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 317).

2) The Nature of Drama

Drama as pedagogy, according to O'Toole, 'is by its very nature a negotiated group art form and is therefore a non-reproducible experience' (2006: p.46). In other words, based upon group interactions, students in the workshops would build up a specific set of relationships in the context of the drama exercises. Therefore, O'Toole suggests that the whole process should be closely studied, and suggests that case study provides the chance for

researchers to be 'deeply involved in the structure, processes and outcomes of the project' (2006: p.46).

3) Real Life Experience and Literary Community

The research project focused on making literature matter to common readers, so I used the Leavisite tradition (1960) and reception theory to frame my teaching principles. Both frames advocate an intimate relationship between reader and literary text, therefore stressing the richness of literary understanding, as well as the variety of interpretations that emanate from different readers. Case studies allow researchers to look at the phenomenon 'in its real-life context', and 'investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance' (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007: p.254). As to this research, the case study approach allowed me to catch the most valuable data - students' lived experiences of, thoughts about, and feelings for the literary texts we were exploring through drama.

4.3.2.2 Methods

Participant-observation

Wilkinson and Birmingham have suggested that 'a particularly effective way to study groups in depth is to become part of them, immerse yourself in them, go where they go as they go there, and watch what they do as they do it' (2003: p.119). As to this research, I was the teacher observer who conducted the programme, took part in the events of the research, and observed the occurrences taking place in the field.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) classify participation in research into four degrees – complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer, and their interactions with the group are in descending order. I have to admit that during the research process, I found it was hard to observe students' responses whilst teaching and my observations could not avoid a certain amount of subjectivity. However, the nature of drama pedagogy allowed me to conduct some more detached observations in class. When students worked on certain drama exercises, especially group work, I could walk around the classroom, get very close to them, listen to their discussions, watch their interactions, and take field notes.

Field notes

There are a number of ways to collect data through structured observation, which, however, could not be applied in my research. Even though I could make a detailed and systematic observation schedule in advance, the observation in practice still tended to be unstructured, because I had to focus much of my attention on teaching and acting, and due to the improvisational nature of participatory drama, the unpredictable responses and consequences that happened in class were neither possible to be taken into account beforehand nor fully to be investigated immediately. Therefore, I chose to keep field notes as a source of data. After each session, I made detailed notes based on my observations in class. These notes were entirely based upon my own memory and constitute a record of the researcher's perception of the programme.

Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2007) suggest that field notes can be written at the level of description and reflection. Detailed instructions have been given by predecessors (LeCompte and Preissle 1993; Spradley, 1980; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). As to this research, I chose to apply O'Toole's (2006) straightforward suggestions:

- 1) Limit and filter what you see through your selective lens.
- 2) Record your immediate reflections and thoughts about what is happening.
- 3) However centrally involved in the field work, keep a calm mind.

Therefore, the field notes based on my student observations mainly focused on:

- 1) Group work such as still images that provoked other students' responses like laughter or surprise, especially from the blind angle that the camera could not capture.
- 2) Students' responses to the important questions/ instructions, and the researcher's immediate thoughts about those responses.
- 3) The moments when students became confused or impatient.
- 4) The moments when students could not finish the task or misunderstood the instructions.

After all that, however, the data generalized from research notes still remain rather partial and subjective. In addition, then, as Cohen, Morrison and Manion suggest that 'observations should include both oral and visual data'

(2007: p.407), I used audio-visual recording as a powerful supplement to my written record.

Audio-visual recording

When I could obtain the approval from schools and students, the workshops in my research were recorded by camera all the way through. Cohen, Manion and Morrison indicate that 'audio-visual data collection has the capacity for completeness of analysis and comprehensiveness of material, reducing both the dependence on prior interpretations by the researcher and the possibility again of only recording events which happen frequently' (2007: p. 313). As a mechanical recording device, the camera has no subjectivities thus its recorder is faithful to the events. Thus I saw the audio-visual data as a useful complement to my limited vision and could examine my recordings as a potential corrective to my partiality. Additionally, the form of a video record allowed me greater flexibility to examine the events. Since it can be watched repeatedly and liberally, I was able to do a careful analysis, and make additional observations anytime.

This combination of first-hand field notes and the audio-visual recording indeed allowed me to form an organized and systematic observation but I cannot deny its imperfections. Despite the constraints of time scale, the viewing angle, the image and sound quality of the video recording, the essential problem lies in the nature of observation, for it is of necessity a highly selective research method. One cannot forget that observation and video recording are both 'operated' by a researcher. Although video recording can overcome subjectivity in certain ways, the researcher may well

still neglect some information when watching it. Observation as a vital approach to gathering qualitative data must, therefore, be combined with other forms of data collection.

Interview

In the semi-structured group interviews, all the interview questions for Parts 1 and 2 were asked at the same time. Therefore I shall not repeat the details and rationale of the interview, which I have already explained in the previous section. This section mainly focuses on the design of the interview questions.

01. Have you read the two original texts? Do you like them, which one do you prefer?
02. Do you want to have a conversation with any characters in the two stories?.
03. Some of the drama work contained historical details, where did you get your inspiration from?
04. Did you feel other people's responses in the drama exercises helped your understanding of the story?
05. Would you pass moral judgement on any of the characters?
06. Did working in role help you to understand the characters or the story?
07. Which drama exercises did you enjoy? Why?

The questions focus on three issues. Firstly, these students' understanding or interest in the two modernist texts after the drama class, which aimed to investigate whether the drama teaching had engaged the students and whether the teaching had helped them connect with and make sense of the text (See Question 1). Secondly, the potential and effectiveness of the

participatory drama exercises. Questions 2, 4, 6, and 7 particularly focus on the interaction between the reader and the text; the function of a literary community, and any change of viewpoint. Third is the conflict between moral and aesthetic values. Question 5 directly enquired into this, whereas students' responses to Question 2 also revealed their moral outlook towards the characters.

The constraints of the interview in this part of the research lie in the area of ethical concerns. I could not command students to read the original text or have an extra lecture/ seminar to analyse the text with them afterwards, when they could have reflected more deeply on their drama work. Therefore, only six of all the students that I interviewed read the original texts, which made a general investigation of participants' understanding of the text very difficult. And to some extent, it also shows that my attempt at using drama to teach modernist literature did not lead to many good results, at least in terms of persuading students to want to read the original texts. Moreover, although students expressed their liking for some of the drama exercises, because I did not have the chance to explain the drama translation to them, their answers showed that they engaged in and enjoyed the exercises without really penetrating the thinking that guided them. This also constitutes a pedagogic failure on my behalf.

4.3.3 Limitations

The case study approach has been criticised for its weaknesses in generalising and its inevitable subjectivity. As Nisbet and Watt point out, the results of case study 'may not be generalizable except where other readers/ researchers see their applications' and 'they (case studies) may be selective,

biased, personal and subjective' (cited in Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007: p.256).

As to this research project, I must admit that, in consideration of its breadth, five groups in specific fields are not sufficient to cover the entirety of my target group – the young common readers in higher education in China. Although the responses from the students in my research revealed certain significant and typical features emanating from their ages, life experiences, academic knowledge and family backgrounds, the five sample groups could only ever represent a small amount of college students in China. In addition, the two cases only worked on two pieces of modernist literature. As I have argued previously, the two texts have the potential of presenting the qualities of modernist short stories as well as the difficulties of teaching them. But the complexity and variety of modernism could not be fully explored through the study of any two texts. Moreover, as a student researcher, my personal opinions and judgements may more or less be involved in the results. But these deficiencies do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that case study has been valueless here.

First, a case study is better understood as an exploration of a new field rather than a course of reasoning that leads to an undefined ending or an unconvincing conclusion. As Simons (1996) has advised, researchers should challenge existing forms by providing new perspectives, and embrace the complexity of people rather than try to resolve their tensions. As to my research, I cannot deny that it is incapable of proving the effectiveness of teaching modernist literature through participatory drama in a general sense;

but from another perspective, this research could provoke some new thinking about literary education and challenge conventional opinions. I agree with Winston's argument that 'we use case study to seek out rather than solve problems, provoke rather than answer questions, deepen our understanding rather than rush to closure' (2006: p.45).

On the other hand, the weaknesses of subjectivity can be possibly reduced to a large extent if the whole project is well-organised. Stenhouse argues that 'the problem of field research in case study is to gather evidence in such a way as to make it accessible to subsequent critical assessment, to internal and external criticism and to triangulation' (1988, 78-79). Therefore, in order to avoid partiality as well as to add validity to this case study, I used triangulation as a principle when constructing the research design.

4.4 Data Analysis and Triangulation

All data are meaningless to the researcher until she analyses them. Data analysis, as Stake indicates, is 'a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations' (1995: p.71). And neither quantitative nor qualitative data has more or less importance than the other. The use of data depends on its fitness to the research purpose.

4.1.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Although quantitative data analysis is often used in large scale research, numerical data can also be employed in smaller scale research projects such as case study and action research. As to this project, 78 students completed the questionnaires, which generated quantitative data.

Scale of the data

I chose ordinal scales to classify the data gathered from the questionnaire since ordinal scales 'introduce an order into the data', 'include items of rating scales and Likert scales, and are frequently used in asking opinions and attitudes' (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007, p. 502). The questionnaire in my research was designed, as I have explained, using a Likert scale.

Students were asked their opinions about canonical literature and literary education. The questionnaire introduced five-point scale for them to position their attitudes toward the issues.

Variables

The relationship between different variables has also been considered in my research. The students' basic information (gender, age, major) are independent variables whilst their responses to questions designed for my research are the dependent variables; and, in the analysis chapter, I will consider whether they appear to influence each other or not.

4.1.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

There is no iron rule in qualitative data analysis but the issue of '*fitness for purpose*' (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007). Compared to quantitative data, qualitative data often focus on fewer people and tend to be more detailed. Therefore, I organized the data in two ways. First, students who had similar responses to particular issues were organized by groups, such as all the answers indicating 'socio-historical background is important for understanding literature' being analysed together. Cohen, Morrison and Manion advocate this method for 'it automatically groups the data and

enables themes, patterns and similarities to be seen at a glance' (2007, p. 467) In addition, the data also presented by research questions, such as any data that was relevant to 'translating modernist short stories into participatory drama' were gathered into the same group, because in this way 'it draws together all the relevant data for the exact issue of concern to the researcher, and preserves the coherence of the material' (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007: p. 468).

Triangulation

The research design was as follows: in each of the two cases, I conducted a three-hour drama workshop with five groups of college students. With every group, at the beginning of the teaching, questionnaires were handed out to each student in order to find out the basic information about the students' attitude towards reading literature; then, the drama workshops were closely observed. As a student researcher I kept field notes, (see the section above) and all the sessions were documented by audio-visual recording. Thirdly, at the end of each project, five students from Groups 1.2.4.5 and six students from Group 3 were invited to have a short interview (in small groups with Groups 1.2.3; and individually with Groups 4 and 5, as determined by the time, space, and the students' timetables) in order to explore their understanding of the text and their opinions about the teaching (see the section on interview). Finally, drama conventions also played a role as a research method to test the efficiency of the teaching. The four methods allowed this fieldwork to be viewed from different perspectives. Moreover, the multiple methods can be interpreted as an incorporated combination. This

combination of methods was intended to help ensure validity by complementing each other, the meanings generated from these methods also providing evidence for comparison and correspondence.

‘Triangulation may utilize either normative or interpretive techniques; or it may draw on methods from both of these approaches and use them in combination’ (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007; p.142).

As the main method of data collection, observation involved a number of subjective impressions. However, when the data was interpreted in comparison with data generated from questionnaires and interviews, the researcher’s subjective thoughts and feelings could be verified or revised by students’ opinions. Meanwhile, the data gathered from quantitative and qualitative methods were used to support and complement each other. The ‘standardized data from identical questions’ (Denscombe, 2007, p.154), or the quantitative data gathered from questionnaires could be analysed in comparison to the qualitative data collected through observation and interview.

4. 5. Ethical Issues

In this programme, the research purpose, content, method design and outcome report were all conducted with an awareness of the need for an appropriate ethical code.

4.5.1 Informed consent

Diener and Crandall define informed consent as ‘the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being

informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions' (Cited in Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2007, p.52). Although in China colleges and universities are not strict about informed consent, I still obtained consent forms signed by the students to make sure that all those who joined this research project did so voluntarily and fully understood its nature.

4.5.2 Privacy

In the context of social science research, a student's right to privacy may be violated. Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2007) remind researchers to make their intentions 'clear and explicit' to students, after which students can choose to relinquish their right to privacy or the researcher can anonymize or confidentially protect them. In my research, all the students' names are anonymised, and none of the photos, audio-visual documents and students' written tasks will be used for other purposes.

4.5.3 Conclusion

I admit that this research design is incapable of providing a grand view of teaching modernist literature through drama in a general sense, but it can produce some data to testify to new thinking about literary education in China in order to challenge conventional opinions. This project is inevitably just a start on a much bigger journey with this goal in mind. Hopefully it can serve to elucidate problems for further researchers who may wish to work with different kinds of literary texts and research approaches.

Chapter Five

Analysis of the Pilot Study

5.1 Introduction

The pilot study, as the preliminary component of the research project, was designed to provide an outlook on the potential participants' existing literary understanding as well as their reading experiences; and, at the same time, to examine the possibility of drama pedagogy as a practical means to teach modernist texts. The pilot study took the form of case study. More details of the methodological design have been provided in Chapter Four, so this chapter will mainly focus on the analysis of data relative to the research questions guiding this study.

The research questions in the pilot study were:

- ♦ What are the students' reading habits and tastes? Is reading literature, especially fiction, in any ways significant in their cultural lives?
- ♦ How do the students appreciate and evaluate the values of literary works? To what extent does their school education affect their literary understanding?
- ♦ What do the students think of complex and difficult works, especially twentieth century modernist literature? What are the main obstacles they see in reading those texts?

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- ♦ Can participatory drama change the way of reading a story from perception to participation? And does it help young people to understand and to engage in the text; and if so, in what ways?

In this pilot study, I conducted a three hour drama workshop on *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*⁹. I have to admit that the findings of the pilot are constrained by the immaturity of my drama design, the limited scope of the case and the lack of triangulation in data collection and analysis. However, the data emerging still significantly informed the subsequent main project in terms of methodological design (See Ch. 4 for more information), research context and teaching strategies. Therefore I will discuss it in relation to: 1) the methodology of the main project; 2) the adjustment of teaching objectives and content; 3) the understanding it provided on how to improve the drama pedagogy. This chapter consequently includes a more detailed description of the project design outlined in the chapter on methodology; analysis of data regarding the research questions; a discussion of the impact of the pilot's findings on the main project design; and my conclusion.

5.2 Pilot Design

The pilot study was conducted with a group of ten post graduate students (aged between 22 and 28) at Warwick University, including eight girls and two boys. There were seven girl students and one boy from the MA in Drama and Theatre Education, one girl majoring in education studies, and one boy from the Warwick Manufacturing Group. All the students spoke Chinese as their first language. None of them were from lower income families. Most of

⁹The drama scheme that I used is the first version, which has since been revised three times in the following research practices.

them had completed their undergraduate studies in very competitive universities in Mainland China and Taiwan. Apart from the boy in WMG, who had majored in engineering, all the other nine students had an education background in humanities or the arts. The background of the participants suggests, therefore, that this was a group of well-educated young people whom we might expect to share certain cultural accomplishments.

The plan of this pilot study was to observe the three hour drama workshop on the short story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* as teacher and researcher, and to conduct a follow-up interview with four students in order to find out their ideas about reading literature and to further explore their opinions about the drama workshop, their understanding of the story as well as their thoughts depicted in the drama exercises.

5.2.1 Observation

The participant observation was structured loosely around the drama lesson. As teacher and researcher, most of the participant observation focused on the students' responses in the drama exercises, including the drama games, still image and scene work. I moved among the students whilst they planned the still image or scene work, in order to hear their ideas about the tasks and their understandings of the story. I observed and took notes on their acting, especially in the scene works of the story that they presented¹⁰, which was the main part in the drama scheme. I compared their responses with my initial design, which helped me evaluate the strength of the drama pedagogy

¹⁰ The scene works includes two parts in the pilot study. The first is to present three life scenes in the hero's early life by using certain literary references, for which I provide a detailed discussion later. The second part is the exercise of 'the last 24 hours of the hero', See Appendix B, Drama lesson of *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, Film-making exercise 3.

as well as its potential flaws. Meanwhile, it also allowed me to glimpse certain areas worth investigating in the interviews. After the workshop, I revised the field notes and coded and categorized the data.

5.2.2 Interview

My initial plan was to conduct a group interview with four students after the drama workshop, but subsequently two of them contacted me again the next day after they had read the original text. Four girls voluntarily joined the initial interview, 2 of them (Miga and Murphy) were from Mainland China and two (Charlotte and Edie) from Taiwan. I interviewed the two Chinese girls again individually after they had read the original text. All four interviewees had literature and arts-related educational backgrounds. The group interview questions reflected my interest in their reading experiences, their opinions about the current situation of young people's reading activities in their countries, as well as their feedback on the drama lesson. In the individual interviews, I mainly focused on the students' understanding of the original text.

5.2.3 Coding Categories

Coding Categories initially began with the issues and ideas emerging from the drama class and the interviews. The data from the interviews was mapped closely to the data drawn from the observation, in order to provide different angles for looking at the students' responses.

In this analysis, I will focus on the following subjects:

- ♦ Students' reading experience

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- ♦ The previous literary education of the students
 - ♦ Reading difficulties of literature in general
 - ♦ Moral values in literary texts
 - ♦ Students' understanding of the text
 - ♦ The effectiveness of drama exercises

The following analysis is considered in relation to literature on reflectionist theory, the Leavisite tradition, reception theory, and the edifying school as detailed in Chapter 2.

5.3 Reading Experience

5.3.1 The Intimate Love of Reading

At the beginning of the interview, I asked the students two questions designed to gain a brief impression of their reading habits and tastes.

- 1) Which is your favourite book or who is your favourite writer?
- 2) Why do you like your favourite book or what are your standards for good literature?

Edie: *Dream of the Red Chamber* is the book that I have been reading all the time. Although I have learnt many scenes and words by heart already, every time I can always find something new in it. It has already become part of my life.

I like books that are aesthetically good, beautiful language.

Charlotte: It's hard to say straight away, I haven't got particular standards, but I know if I like it or not. No standards, as long as it's well-written, it is beautiful.

Miga: Favourite book is *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Márquez. To be honest, I don't think I quite understand the story ... and magical realism. But the love in the story is moving; I feel I understand the heroine's feelings.

Murphy: Dürrenmatt's plays, for the brilliant storytelling, and the way he writes about humanity. And I like Chekhov, too. I have to say when I was young I really could not understand him. I just wanted to shout at the character - if you want to go to Moscow, why don't you just buy a train ticket and go? Until I got married, and one day I saw a students' production of *Three Sisters*, the acting was awful but I couldn't stop crying in the theatre. The feeling of being trapped hit me, so vividly.

The students' answers can be investigated from a few aspects. Firstly, none of them suggested any clear standard or system to evaluate literary works, their responses being not informed by scholarly knowledge but by their instinctive feelings or understandings of the literary work. This echoes Virginia Woolf's portrait of 'the common reader'—"he is guided by an instinct to create for himself" (1984, p. 11). Although two students mentioned the significance of aesthetic value, they did so very vaguely as 'beautiful' and 'well-written', and mainly focused on language or rhetoric. Secondly, when the students were talking about their favourite books and why, there were a

few key words in their answers, such as 'part of my life', 'moving', 'understand', 'hit me', which connect reading experience with personal life experience. On the one hand we see that literature plays a role of self-understanding and enrichment in their lives, which is the significance of literary reading as suggested by F. R. Leavis (1960); on the other hand, the students engaged in the literary works through subjective interpretations based on their own life experiences, thus exemplifying reception theory's contention that the meaning of literature is not given or determined but is enriched by readers during the process of reading and re-reading (Fish, 1970). Edie's feeling towards *Dream of the Red Chamber*—'every time I can always find something new in it', and the change in Murphy's response to Chekhov's play both show that even to one individual, the understanding of a particular work is in a dynamic mode, influenced by one's life experience, either specifically articulated, such as marriage, or just vaguely felt. Thirdly, according to the important conception of the 'horizon of expectation' (Jauss, 1970), the students' aesthetic implication is from the relatively more traditional way of literary understanding. Although their favourite works reveal a wide range of interests, from eighteenth century Chinese classical novels to late nineteenth century Russian plays to twentieth century magical realism, the students all describe a similar way that they interpret them, in terms of a personal relationship with the work. However, such horizons of expectation would face a great challenge when the students encountered modernist literature, especially Borges's stories, as I have argued in Chapter Two and Chapter Eight.

5.3.2 Literary Education

In the individual interviews, I asked the two Chinese students how their literacy teachers taught fiction at school. Their answers were more or less the same.

Miga: First divide the text into a few sections, summarize the meaning of each section, and then summarize the theme of the whole text.

Murphy: Introduce the author and background of the text; summarize the meaning of each paragraph then the meaning of the story, from primary school to senior high school.

The two students' answers provide us with a mechanical formula for literary education – outlining the meaning of the story and then summarizing the theme. It would be unfair, of course, to draw a simple conclusion that this formula is the general method of literary education in China. Many Chinese teachers may well have other teaching strategies. However, the two students were at different ages and from two different cities; when they were asked about their most familiar impression of the literary education they had had at school, answers they spontaneously gave are interestingly the same, which at least suggests that this formula of literary interpretation could well be influential in many Chinese schools. This idea is borne out, as we saw in Chapter Two, by Wu Xiaodong (2003), who argues that the pattern of the reflectionist theory dominates in Chinese education: “by demonstrating an event/story, the author

reflects certain social reality, uncovers the truth in the society or the principles of social development, and informs us with certain guidance” (Wu, 2003, p.7); a theory that does not suit the view of fiction in literary modernism.

The results of such literary education are not easily judged. All the students in the pilot study had their undergraduate education in good universities, which proves that they must have done well in university entrance exams, in which literacy is an important compulsory subject. However, in a drama exercise, I asked a group of three students to work on creating a scene of an old Chinese aristocratic family, and the language of their dialogue had to imitate the style of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Chapter Three of this novel is the key text in the senior high school’s literacy textbook (2004). However, when they were working on this scene, the boy in the group complained that he knew nothing about the novel apart from the three main characters’ names. I reminded him that he should have learnt at least one chapter at school. But he replied, ‘Did I? I can’t remember.’ *Dream of the Red Chamber* is a classic novel, which has a supreme status in the history of Chinese literature.

According to the curriculum design (ibid), the selected chapter is highlighted as one of the most important key texts. If imitating the language style is a rather demanding task, having a basic knowledge of this novel should not be too difficult for any Chinese student who has been to high school. Of course the boy’s single case does not prove that literary education in Chinese schools is a failure, but it forced me to realise that, in the subsequent field work, I could not simply assume that

students' literary knowledge would at least include the compulsory key texts in the Chinese national curriculum; and that it is possible that the current situation of students' literary understanding is worse than is promised in the national curriculum.

5.3.3 Reading Difficulties

In the group interview, students were asked about the factors that might cause difficulties in reading. By sharing their experiences, the four students agreed that the main problems are: obscure language; unfamiliar context or socio-historical background; too many foreign names; bad translation; and complex thought. But some students provided interestingly nuanced opinions.

Edie: You can still enjoy a book without fully understanding it. We can never really understand great literature, can we? "Being an avid reader, but hardly seeking extraneous interpretations"¹¹ is also a kind of pleasure in reading.

This opinion that 'we can never really understand great literature' develops the idea of 'complex thought' in literary works into seeing it as something positive, as part of the infinite vitality of literature, which in turn echoes the kind of dynamic process that reception aesthetics suggests. Meanwhile, she also pointed out the importance of pleasure in reading, and celebrated a non-utilitarian way of reading, which Dr

¹¹ The quotation (in original: 好读书, 不求甚解) is from a celebrated essay *Biography of Mr Five Willows* (五柳先生传) by Tao Yuanming, a poet and essayist in 3-4th century China.

Johnson appreciated, and Virginia Woolf quotes and develops in her book *The Common Reader* (Woolf, 1984).

Murphy: There are certain stories you can only understand at a certain age, when you have a certain amount of knowledge or life experience.

Charlotte: Everything on earth has its own 缘分¹², which cannot be forced.

Both of them here express an opinion that the reader's horizon of expectation (knowledge base/ life experience/ personal interest) can affect her understanding of a literary work. Charlotte's use of the Chinese word '缘分' compared the relationship between the reader and the text to an intimate relationship, like love or friendship.

I checked *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* against the list they provided. This story at least includes three difficulties – unfamiliar context, foreign names, and complex thought. In the individual interviews, I asked the two Chinese girls about their feelings of reading the original text.

Murphy: The first impression of the original text is - what the hell is this? So many names, references all over the place, the foreign names that he mentioned I never heard of. It is annoyingly weird, really put me off. But the story itself, from what you said, is very interesting. I do want to read it properly.

¹² She used a Chinese word that is hard to be translated into English. 缘分 yuan fen, has multiple meanings – luck, fate, destiny, the chance to come across someone or something.

Miga: After the workshop, I read the original story, and Borges's other two short stories *the Book of Sand* and *Three Versions of Judas*. The reading itself didn't take very long, I remember the plots, but I'm not sure what is going on, what the author is really trying to say. Some ideas sound mysterious and interesting, such as a book growing new pages whilst old pages are disappearing.

Their answers confirm the three concerns but also reveal some challenges that belong to Borges's stories in particular. The complaint of 'too many names', 'references all over the place' is caused by the intertextual play and the mirror effect structure; 'I'm not sure what is going on, what the author is really trying to say' is probably a sign of being confused by the mixture of different narratives and the complex philosophical ideas. I will discuss the potential challenges these raise in Chapter Eight.

However, their responses imply that good literary works can be appreciated on different levels. They may like it only for the story – 'the story itself, from what you said, is very interesting', or be fascinated by the mysterious ideas or literary effects without really understanding them. Indeed, although such a kind of reading may not do the original text justice, it may still help students grasp certain attractions of the text; however, it is worth noting that the interpretation of great literature can be an infinite process, so some moderation or compromise is a realistic choice for the teacher as the pleasure belonging to common readers is something they should not be deprived of.

5.4 Drama Lesson

The last section has provided a brief discussion on the research context of this pilot study, including the students' reading experience and pre-existing literary understandings. This part of the analysis will examine my attempt to translate the text into a participatory drama structure. I shall reflect on the findings in the final section and analyze the gains and losses of this kind of dramatic translation within this particular research context.

5.4.1 Setting

In the drama, I changed the setting of the story from revolutionary Ireland in 1824 to China in the 1920s. In Chapter Eight, I detail the reasons for this change. The students' feedback in the interviews demonstrated that at least some of my concerns were justified. As I mentioned in the last section, this group of students reckoned that an unfamiliar socio-historical background and foreign names would impede them from engaging in reading activities. Therefore, adapting the story into a Chinese context would be a possible strategy for reducing this and might help them engage in the story more quickly.

I built up the context through the drama exercise of a 'newspaper' (See Ch. 8 and Appendix B). This pilot study trialled the initial version of this exercise. In role as a broadcaster, I announced the news that a famous writer had just finished a biography about her great grandfather, a general who had been assassinated in the 1920s. In this fictional broadcast, I referred to short reports about the biography written in different newspapers and magazine. The three papers and the magazine I chose enabled me to present

contrasting reports that built up the image of a young, heroic, charismatic and mysterious character from the perspectives of mainstream authority, liberal intellectualism and the kind of gossip found in the tabloid press.

Borges only uses a few adjectives to describe Kilpatrick –“the young, the heroic, the beautiful, the assassinated” (2000, p.102). The portrait of this character in the ‘newspaper’ exercise is based on this brief sketch; but I also added more information about the character’s family background, political career, and personal life, inspired by real, historical figures in China in the early twentieth century. This exercise worked well in sparking the students’ interest. They immediately expressed fascination for such a figure and engaged in a group discussion on his character and his life. Two girls even told me that such a hero could satisfy all their fantasies about a perfect man!

It is hard to measure to what extent the Chinese context helped the students become interested in the story. All the students’ responses can only prove that the historical background in the drama adaptation was not so alien as to prevent them from entering the fiction. Moreover, familiarity is a relative concept. When the students were asked what they knew about 1920s China, the answers they gave suggested that they were unfamiliar with this historical context.

John: Warlords fighting with each other, quite chaotic.

Murphy: Warlord governments killed protesting students? I got the impression from Lu Xun's essay in the textbook –*In memory of Miss Liu Hezhen*.¹³

Such limited historical knowledge of the period did not, perhaps, provide much support for literary understanding. Then again, it was not so much specific historical understanding that mattered here but the more general familiarity of the cultural context. Then what difference did the Chinese context make? The conversation I had with a student after class helped me look at this in another way.

Zack: I really like the character and the story. I wish someone could make a film about it. They must get Andy Liu (a famous Cantonese actor) to play this general; I can just imagine the scenes! That would be really cool!

Zack's words made me think about the reason why these students had listed unfamiliar Socio-historical background as causing a reading difficulty. It is possible that some had, through their education, internalised the reflectionist theory or the tradition of literary realism. But it may also have been because the readers wanted to place the story in a time and space that they could imagine. In this case, although historical knowledge could not help them to make sense of the story (something that is equally applicable to the original Borges's story), their impressions of an era could help them to *visualise* it in their minds. In this way, 1920s China was like a vessel that could be filled by their imaginations.

¹³ This essay by Lu Xun (2005) was written after March Eighteenth Massacre in 1926 – the central government of China killed over 40 students in protesting, and Liu Hezhen was student leader.

5.4.2 Intertextuality

To me, the most fascinating part of this story is the imitation of Shakespearean plays. In the pilot, I wished to foreground the intertextual devices and inspire students to explore the connections between Julius Caesar and Kilpatrick. In the original text, the great-grandson chooses to publish a book ‘dedicated to the hero’s glory’ after some hesitation. The reason is so interesting that it must be explored. Yet I am also interested in what the content of this book might be. How might he create the heroic character? It cannot be based upon the truth, which he has decided to cover up. So I made a bold hypothesis— since the hero’s death imitates literature, this biography by his great-grandson would also be written under the influence of established literary works. In my adaptation, the literary influences in this biography make the book resemble one written by famous writers that the great-grand daughter might imitate. Then the real history would be covered up through delicate literary devices. The undeserving hero would gain a second term of fame through the help of art. My intention was for the students to become aware that fame was brought to the hero, even after his death, through the power of art and poetry.

But this plan did not work well in the pilot. I divided students into three groups and asked each to visualise three chapters of the biography in silence. Then I played a literary critic making comments on these three chapters. The critic told all the participants that the biography was actually a fiction, for it recalls characters, plots and even writing styles of certain literary texts. However, this critic’s comments really confused the students, most of whom did not

respond to his words as those of a professional literary reviewer, and certainly not as a figure intended to remind them of the importance of intertextuality.

Murphy: Are you implying the writer committed plagiarism? How can you convince us? How do I know it is not a slander?

Jeanette: The critic does not like the writer. Is there anything personal between the critic and the writer? Is the critic taking revenge by ruining the reputation of the writer?

Words such as ‘slander’, ‘does not like’, ‘personal’ and ‘revenge’ show that the students took the critic to be himself a character from inside the whole story, and immediately began to imagine his relationship to the other characters.

The students’ confusion here was caused by my misuse of fictional discourse. According to Lodge, fictional discourse alternates between “*showing* us what happened and *telling* us what happened”. The purest form of showing is direct speech and that of telling is authorial summary (1992, p. 122). As we have seen, Borges applies the discourse of non-fiction in fiction writing, the narrative of the original text being highly concise and its plot related in the form of a summary. Lodge suggests that a fiction entirely in summary form would be “almost unreadable” (his discussion focuses on the novel) but he does acknowledge that the narrative method of the summary has been used in contemporary fiction writing (ibid, p.126). In Borges’s short stories, we can see that such fictive narrative not only works well but has also been hailed as a ‘poetic success’ by Paul de Man (1964). However, unlike modern fiction,

the fictional discourse of drama, including participatory drama, tends toward showing rather than telling. Imitating a literary critic's way of talking does re-create the form of the authorial voice in the original text, but within a drama framework, where the dominating discourse is that of showing, what was intended to be authorial summary was perceived by the participants as direct speech. In other words, the critic's words were automatically assumed by the students to be the direct speech of a character.

After this exercise, I asked each group to add dialogues into their performances of the 'chapter' that they worked on; the language had to be in the specific writer's style that the critic had mentioned. The first group worked on a scene of the hero's early life in an old aristocratic family, their dialogue had to imitate the style of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The second group was asked to present a scene of the hero's love story, imitating the plot and characterization of *Biography of the Dragon-Beard Man*, a story in *Tales from Records of the Taiping Era*. The third group worked on the scene of the hero's political life – a charismatic young general giving a public speech and they could choose to imitate the style of Ernest Hemingway's writing or Winston Churchill's speech. However, none of the groups managed to do this intertextual task successfully. All of them complained to me that they did not know enough about the novel or story to imitate the style. To be fair to myself, the literary references I chose are well known in China. One is *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the most famous classical novel in Chinese and on the national curriculum. Despite this, two students in the first group said they knew nothing about this novel; whereas Edie, the only one who had read it, told me that 'Imitating the style of *Red Chamber* is way too difficult.

The language is so different from our oral language nowadays.’ In the second group, all the three students said they had heard about the names of the main characters, but instead of presenting a courtesan eloping with a young general, they did a scene of a young lady running away with her lover. The last group completely neglected my instruction to imitate the style of Hemingway or Churchill, instead acting the hero’s public image in the style of Ma Ying-jeou, the President of Taiwan at that time – a gentle and smiling politician shaking voters’ hands with his supportive wife behind. The students explained to me it was because their president’s speech is the only public speech they knew and could therefore make use of.

5.5 Conclusion

The data that emerged from the pilot study can be considered relevant to four issues in the theoretical framework presented in the literature review: 1) the current situation of literary education in China, especially the influence of the reflectionist theory, as well as its effect on students’ literary horizon, or ‘interpretive community’ in Fish’s words (Eagleton, 1976; Wu, 2003; Fish, 1980); 2) the concept of the common reader (Woolf, 1984) and reading as communication/friendship (Bate, 2010; Booth, 1988, 3) the difficulty of understanding modernist literature and the challenge of teaching it; 4) the translation from literary text to participatory drama (Benjamin, 1999; Jakobson, 1959; Venuti, 2001), especially the change of discourse (Booth, 1983, Lodge, 1992).

First, the pilot study indicates that those Chinese students’ school education in literature was conducted in a very formal manner. From the students’

responses, the mechanical formula of textual analysis was used by Chinese teachers in different parts of the country. Since this formula, according to Wu, has a theoretical base of the reflectionist theory (Wu, 2003), I suggest that the view of historical materialism as well as its consequent tendency toward literary realism may affect the students' literary horizons in various ways - although they may develop similar literary understandings or go completely against it, the influence itself is certainly not insignificant. In fact, they related literary works to their life experiences, emphasized the relation between literature and real life, which all contain echoes of reflectionist theory.

Second, the pilot also shows that the students' reading habits characterise the features of 'the common reader' (Woolf, 1983). Some of them were simply book lovers unschooled in literary theory, reading for pleasure and self-understanding; some even established an intimate personal relationship with certain works. On the one hand, the common reader's response celebrates a kind of 'beholder's share' which turns reading from a passive act into an active experience; on the other hand, such reading, to some extent, tends to be 'hasty, inaccurate, and superficial' (Woolf, 1983, p. 11), and moreover neglects the study of form, for the "common feeling" may "forget that a work of literature is ...the product of a writer's craft" (Bate, 2010, p.24).

Third, the students' feedback on reading difficulties as well as their performance in class both indicate certain deficiencies that would stop them from understanding modernist literature. These deficiencies relate to a basic amount of reading that they were supposed to gain at school, a brief understanding of narrative and rhetoric, and a rather simplistic understanding

of the relationship between reality and fiction, real life experience and artistic illusion. And those deficiencies might be caused by their literary education and the features of the common reader.

Fourth, participatory drama has certain strengths, such as establishing context, visualising scenes and literary images, and creating suspense and dramatic tension, which may help students to engage in the story. However, the poetic innovations of modernist literature, especially its narrative structure and rhetorical devices, present a substantial challenge to the translation from original text to participatory drama, as it exacerbates the significant differences between the discourses of narrative literary fiction and of drama.

The findings in the pilot study reminded me of certain key points: firstly, the teaching content and objectives should be moderated according to the common reader's literary knowledge and horizon, otherwise certain exercises such as intertextual play could not be conducted successfully. And the drama translation should find a balance between the pre-existing literary understandings of the participants (taking due account of the influence of reflectionist theory and literary realism) with the innovations of modernist literature, in case they become confused by such an unfamiliar literary form. Secondly, the common reader's lack of understanding of form reveals the importance of introducing them to a poetic approach to literary understanding. But as Bate suggests, the study of poetics cannot trade in reading pleasure for a dissection of literary works; on the contrary, it should add additional pleasure by uncovering the magic of how a good story has been told.

Chapter Six

Part 1: The Research Context; Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

As outlined in the methodology chapter, this research project takes the form of two case studies. The two cases are categorized by their teaching of two texts, but the whole research project is composed of two components: Part One focuses on 'context', which aims to investigate the participant students' literary horizons, the literary education they had had previously, and their opinions about adaptations of literary works into dramatic form. Part Two consists of the two case studies seen within this context, which examine the effectiveness of participatory drama as pedagogy in teaching the two selected modernist texts. This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from Part One, which utilized questionnaire and interview as the main research methods. The understanding of the educational context works for three purposes: 1) to further inform my teaching; 2) to investigate the target group's reading experiences and the current situation of literary education in China, whilst recognizing whilst recognizing this is limited to a relatively small group; 3) to offer a specific context to look at students' responses to the teaching in my later analyses.

The key questions guiding the analysis in this chapter are:

-
- ♦ What kind of literary horizon did these students have, including their reading experience, literary taste, and standards for evaluating literary works?
 - ♦ Did the literary education that students received at school affect their literary horizons? If so, in what ways?
 - ♦ In what ways would the established literary understanding affect students' engagement with modernist literature?
 - ♦ How did those students consider moral and aesthetic values in literary texts?
 - ♦ What is the potential of using participatory drama as pedagogy to teach modernist literature to those students?

This chapter provides a more detailed analysis of Part One of my research design outlined in the methodology chapter, which includes the discussion of the outcomes and limitations of data gathered from questionnaire and interview. The analysis focuses on data relative to the research questions. A brief conclusion is provided at the end of this chapter.

6.2 Research Design

I began with a pre-project questionnaire with each of the five groups. The questionnaire was designed to acquire a sense of students' ideas about reading experience, literary understanding, literary education and opinions towards dramatized adaptation of literary works; meanwhile the design of the questionnaire also tries to investigate how the overall context of literary

education in China affects the literary horizon and reading experience of the student as an individual reader.

This part of the research also contains some data from the semi-structured interview, in which I asked students to talk about the issues reflected on the questionnaire with more details. Students were asked to give a description and comment of the way their literary class were taught, which mainly focused on the reading part. Moreover, I also asked them to share their reading habits, interests, and experience, how they evaluate a literary text, and their opinions about literary works being dramatized into film, TV series and theatre production.

Questions on their understanding of modernist literature were not asked specifically in neither questionnaire nor interview, because the pilot study informed that Chinese students, including the ones relatively better read, may well possible read little modernist text. However, when they were enquired on their reading experience and literary education in interview, I still asked them whether they read those texts and why, they were also asked to talk about how the four modernist texts in the national curriculum were taught in their senior high schools.

6.3 Coding Categories

Coding categories were reached by exploring the research questions in Part One and suggested by the data from questionnaire and interview. Data collected, coded, and analyzed not only include students' feedback but also my own post-class reflection as recorded in my research journal, which also took note of conversations with students and discussions with the teacher of

the class. The coding categories discussed in the analysis in this chapter include:

- ♦ Socio-historical context
- ♦ Literary understanding as Edification
- ♦ The aesthetic values of literature
- ♦ The role of literary education
- ♦ The potential of participatory drama as pedagogy
- ♦ Literary community

6.4 Socio-historical Context

The pilot study informed me that the literary understandings of the student participants in my main research project would very likely be guided by Marxist literary criticism, especially the reflectionist theory. Socio-historical context plays a significant role in both literary realism and Marxist literary criticism. Hence, in this section I will investigate what the five groups of students thought about this.

I designed a statement in the questionnaire (Item 15) –‘Knowing the socio-historical background of the text helps me to understand it’, only 2 of the 78 in the five different groups chose ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and none of the students expressed negative responses to this statement. I asked interviewees in which way the socio- historical background helped their literary understanding. According to their feedback, this could be: 1) the

socio-historical setting of the story; 2) the socio-historical context in which the author wrote the literary work. And the reasons they provided were as follows.

First, most interviewees claimed that literature depicts human society and human life, therefore socio-historical knowledge helps the reader to make sense of the issues in that particular time, and then to understand the characters and their lives.

Group 3

Penny: In fiction, the author uses the story of the characters to present his thoughts about society and life in a particular era.

Understanding the time and the society can help you to understand the characters.

The answer above reflects a typical view of literary realism and the phrase 'present his thoughts about society' is clearly in line with the reflectionist theory.

Group 5

Liz: The literary education I got at school taught me that learning literature is studying the society that it writes about.

Liz's answer suggests that literary education in China might be seen as a branch of sociology, possibly working for political or ideological ends.

Group 3

Sally: We never thought about why the social-historical background is important, we took the importance for granted, because that is just

part of the literary education we got at school. But sometimes, I do feel that perhaps if I hadn't been told the historical background, I would have developed my own understanding of the text. The socio-historical background or the official interpretation of the history would limit your thoughts... and most of the history that I know is from textbooks of history and history class, but is it the same history that I read in literature? Not necessarily. Sometimes literary works tell us that history, or the history in our textbook, is telling lies.

This answer raises a few important points: 1) that emphasizing the socio-historical context has a deeply rooted tradition in literary education in China so this student even 'took the importance for granted'; 2) that literary education might more or less work as a testimony which supports a particular politicized interpretation of history (the student used the words 'the official interpretation' of history not without irony) and that such reading might limit this particular reader's own understanding; 3) the main source for some students to gain their knowledge of history is through school education. However, Sally had come to realise, through her personal reading and understanding of literature, that her literary and history education had had certain political ends, which presents an interesting phenomenon - the reader started to doubt the reliability of the factual knowledge (history) she had learnt through her personal response to fiction (literature).

Secondly, those interviewees who focused on the socio-historical background of the author argued that an author's life experience would

affect this understanding of the world and aesthetic viewpoint, which might show in the literary work that he wrote. However, these students tended to refer to their own reading experiences to support their ideas.

Eva: If you know how Eileen Chang¹⁴ was brought up in her family, you wouldn't think the characters in her stories are twisted; they are all pretty normal to her. That's why she writes about them as human beings not as monsters.

Freya: We can't use contemporary values to judge characters and their choices. If you know the history, you can understand them.

Readers can accept the presence of "obsolete ethics in literature" as "obsolete military technology, antiquated diction and vanished customs" (Posner, 1998, p. 465). Perhaps the student meant more than that, however, suggesting that social history inevitably affects people's choices in their lives, and that historical knowledge can therefore expand a reader's appreciation of this. These answers therefore raise the important issues of how literature relates to moral values, sympathy and empathy, which I will deal with in more detail in the following section.

I pushed a student who agreed with the significance of socio-historical context to talk about how her life experience had influenced the writing of her favourite writer, Wang Xiaobo¹⁵. She replied:

¹⁴ Eileen Chang (1920 – 1995) is one of the most influential modern Chinese writers. Born into an aristocratic family in Shanghai, she had experienced the decline of her family. Chang's stories on life in 1940s Shanghai and Japanese-occupied Hong Kong are well-known for their portrayal of everyday life rather than their political subtext. Her writing deals with unsettled tensions and contemporary sensibilities but is also greatly influenced by the classics of Chinese literature.

¹⁵ Wang Xiaobo (Chinese: 王小波) (May 13, 1952 – April 11, 1997) was a contemporary Chinese

Group 3

Vera: Depicting the historical picture of the society may not be the ambition of every writer, and some writers, especially good writers, cannot be categorized or discussed according to social-historical standards, because they go beyond time. Wang Xiaobo is the kind of writer who paid little attention to the constraints of his era. If he wanted to write something, that's only because he wanted to play with his own ideas.

Vera's response shows that the importance of socio-historical context is a well-accepted 'common sense' theory underpinning many Chinese students' understanding but that a broader reading experience with different writers can introduce them to new literary horizons.

Third, this well-accepted 'common sense' view also makes some students believe that this kind of realistic literature is superior to other literary genres. Relevance to real life and to a historical background became key criteria with which they evaluated literary works.

Group 4

Cora: I don't like the idea of 'art for art's sake'. I still believe that art that comes from real life has many more subtleties.

writer, well known for his radical thinking, free cultural viewpoint, and unique style of prose writing. He retold several traditional Chinese tales by turning them into self-reorganized stories.

Group 4

Patrick: Without socio-historical background as a base, you can hardly create a work with subtle thought - it may not even be worth reading.

Such responses conform to my hypothesis that literary education in China tends to be limited to particular literary schools and that there is a need to introduce young readers to more possibilities of literary understanding.

A few students provided other perspectives from which to look at this issue. Some argued that they liked to use historical knowledge to visualise a story.

Group 5

Helen: I like to imagine what the characters look like, what kind of clothes they wear, how they walk and talk to each other. Imagining the visual images in a story is a great pleasure in my reading, and socio-historical knowledge helps me to do it.

Group 5

Nicole: Historical knowledge helps me to understand fashion in the 1920s, and then I can imagine the Jazz Age, or old Shanghai.

Some pointed out that it depends on the literary genre.

Group 3

Lucy: It really depends. If you read romantic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, socio-historical background is really not that important. But if you want to read some serious literature, or satirical literature, you

would not be able to make sense of the implications without the context.

In Chapter Nine, I present a more detailed analysis of the historical images drawn from the literary imaginations of participant students and their understanding of literary genre.

6.5 Edification and Aesthetics

The pilot study indicated that common readers, who are my target students, do not have clear criteria for evaluating literature but tend to connect their reading of literature with their life experiences and regard the process as one of self-understanding and enrichment. Two questions emerged from the result of the pilot on which this section will focus: 1) what did the students think about the edifying function of literature? 2) How did they deal with any conflict between moral value and aesthetic value in literature?

In the questionnaire, I designed a statement (Item 11) – reading high-quality literature makes us better human beings. The survey showed that most students (76% in total) believed in the positive influence of literature for helping the reader become a ‘better person’. But 24% of students in total (Group 1: 33%; Group 2: 17%; Group 3: 12.5%; Group 4: 40%; Group 5: 33%) chose ‘neither agree nor disagree’ to this statement, which indicated that a fair proportion of them – almost a quarter – were reserved in their opinions on this idea of literary edification, although according to the survey, none of the students in the five groups thought that high-quality literature would do any harm to a reader’s moral capacities.

Interestingly, however, 52.5% of students responded to another statement (Item 12), which showed that some villains in fiction appeal to them. In other words, whilst most of the students were positive about literary edification, over half in total seem to be attracted by evil characters.

6.5.1 Edification as a diffuse effect

The feedback in the two questions could be seen as contradictory at first glance, which suggests that the students' understanding of literary edification is more subtle than simply extracting didactic lessons for living or models of virtue from literary works. Hence interviewees were asked to explain in what ways literature might make the reader a better human being. In the feedback, some interviewees considered that the edifying value of literary work lies in a diffuse influence.

Group 5

Toby: The influence is imperceptible, it does not work in a didactic way, does not happen over one night.

I have selected Toby's answer for it is very typical of the interview feedback. Many students used her word 'imperceptible', which suggests that they generally disagreed with simple moralistic and didactic readings.

Group 5

Helen: I think reading enriches your soul, your spirit. It inspires you to think, from various perspectives. Then you may develop a very sensitive faculty to understand life and human beings, and become more compassionate.

Helen's response includes the main arguments made by other interviewees. Some students believed that reading literature expands the reader's emotional (and possibly intellectual) horizons; that literature, especially imaginative literary works, leads the reader to respond to other people's experiences and to see the world from other perspectives. This viewpoint echoes Martha Nussbaum's argument on the empathy-inducing role of imaginative literature (See Ch.3). However, as I discussed in Ch.3, empathy can be amoral. Therefore I made further inquiries—does reading necessarily raise empathy? Does empathy always lead to goodness?

Group 5

Emily: Some bookish people tend to isolate themselves from others; they are not interested in real human beings or real life, because they are very well satisfied with the company of books.

Group 5

Helen: It really depends on the particular reader. Some become interesting, kind and compassionate but some just get boring, pretentious and show off. But I don't think the literary works they read deserve any accusation. It is like people eating healthy food but still getting ill. Food doesn't guarantee health. But food is nutritious and innocent!

The two answers can be viewed from different perspectives. First, the students were aware that the effect of reading literature is uncertain; it may well breed alienation ('isolate themselves'), indifference ('not

interested in real human beings and real life') and snobbish superiority ('pretentious and showing off'); Emily mentioned 'the company of books', which is similar to Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum likening reading literature to friendship (See Ch.3), which claims that the influence of such friendship is important but complex. Second, 'the company of books' also suggests another significant point: that reading is normally a lonely activity that one does on one's own. This research is intended to introduce participatory drama to literary reading, as a means of changing literary perception. It would be worth investigating whether or not participatory drama as a new method of literary appreciation can raise a reader's empathy, and whether that is necessary. Third, Helen compared the reading of literature to eating food, this metaphor could suggest a couple of things (although I am not sure if that is exactly what she meant): 1) reading literature enriches the human spirit in the same way that food provides nutrition to the human body, thus becoming an important and integral part of human life; 2) reading can become a celebration of pleasure and enjoyment of life like having a nice meal; 3) those benefits derived from reading good books do not guarantee any well-developed personality, just as the nutrition one gets from food will not necessarily make people healthy, as there are other factors which may affect the reader's life; and the influence of literature also partly depends on the reader's own initiative.

6.5.2 The understanding of humanity

To explore this issue further, the interviewees were asked another question – would you use moral standards to judge characters in fiction or to evaluate the value of a literary work?

From their feedback, I found that although most interviewees provided immediate answers, the reasons given by people with different attitudes shared many similarities. First, many students said that they had basic moral values in mind when they read. They claimed themselves not to be 'judgemental' or 'moralistic', but at the same time they mentioned words like 'bottom lines' and 'very basic moral values'.

Group 5

Robin: I never try to activate my moral value, but my instinctive feeling tells me straight away—something makes me feel uncomfortable.

Group 4

Ariel: I don't judge, people have the right to make their own decisions even if that is immoral, as long as you can't hurt other people.

According to their responses, I suppose that the students were generally against a simple moralistic reading of literature, especially the didactic tradition, which explains why most of the interviewees argued that the edifying effects of reading literature are imperceptible and diffuse.

However, they also have well-established value systems that they would instinctively refer to in their reading activities.

Second, a certain amount of interviewees introduced a new standard – humanity instead of moral value – and their answers came up with a pattern: ‘everyone has his/her own...’, which they completed with words such as ‘story’, ‘struggle’, ‘reason’, ‘concern’, ‘pain’ and ‘secret’. And some of them ended their answer with ‘it is understandable’.

Group 5

Helen: Let’s imagine Macbeth and Brutus, they both did something immoral, but I respect them as noble human beings, because they have something very human that hits me, I feel deeply moved. If we are too moralistic, we may lose the complexity of great literature.

The students, then, were well aware that immoral actions could be caused by complex reasons and motivations, and the depiction of humanity can make the reader understand their situations and even sympathize with their decisions. It echoes their understanding of the edifying function of literature – expanding the reader’s horizons, changing perspectives and leading the reader to respond imaginatively to other people’s lives.

6.5.3 Moral values and aesthetic value

Moreover, the conflict between moral value and aesthetic value also emerged from their feedback in interview. First, literature with morally

offensive views and the author's moral quality would ill-dispose the students from becoming engaged in the work.

Group 4

Jessica: I get very angry if the author expresses monstrous moral views. Why should I torture myself by carrying on?

Group 4

Cora: I find certain things quite unacceptable, such as paedophilia, I just couldn't read anything like that. And some writers disgust me. I don't want to read their works.

The two interviewees might not be using ethical criteria to evaluate literature, however it seems they could only enjoy (which is the opposite of 'torture') works that meet their ethical standards.

Second, some students also mentioned that aesthetic value can make them temporarily suspend their moral standards; and that aesthetic value could even affect their understanding of the moral issues in the work.

Group 4

Wendy: Good writers invite you to get involved in their stories, sometimes I start to understand the characters without even realising it.

Group 5

Nicole: I usually distance myself during reading, but good writers can make you feel what the characters feel. I may not change my mind, but I would understand them more.

The two answers above both mention the understanding of someone else's feelings and life, which is one of the edifying school's (Nussbaum, 1990; 1995; Booth, 1988) main points about literature's contribution to moral capacity, and the depiction of humanity in literature may echo the reader's understanding. If we integrate the two answers, we may conclude that the students believed that the edifying function of literature works alongside its aesthetic value, especially in the way that it helps us appreciate what it means to be human.

However, the disinterested view of enjoying the form of literature for pure aesthetic pleasure, derived from the Kantian tradition, was hardly mentioned in the feedback. Only one student that I interviewed clearly said that if the literary work contains unacceptable moral views, she might still appreciate the form of the work.

Group 4

Cora: I could only appreciate the writing techniques, like the structure and the language; the reading only stays on the surface.

Her answer reveals two things: firstly she only gives a brief understanding of 'form' - the structure and the language, which is quite limited; secondly, she thinks the study of form 'only stays on the surface'.

It is possible that her understanding of form was not well explained in a short interview, but the word 'surface' obviously suggests that she regards content as more superior than form. In addition, the same student had talked about two writers that she particularly disliked – Vladimir Nabokov and Charles Dickens, because 'one writes about paedophilia, the other is a hypocrite'. Putting her moral accusations aside, both Nabokov and Dickens have unquestionable aesthetic merit in English writing but could not be appreciated in her case for moral reasons. Her response makes me doubt whether she could ever really appreciate form when she felt morally offended.

In Chapter One and Two, I mentioned that the study of form or poetics may have been overlooked or at least underestimated in Chinese literary education. I also referred to the analysis of Hamlet's language style in the teacher's book, which is presented in a brief, hasty and summarized way, to exemplify my point. Cora's response suggests that the lack of education in studying form may possibly militate against students' ability to appreciate aesthetic values, because their understanding of form may be limited to basic rhetorical skills and fancy prose. From this perspective, such a superficial approach would leave them short of a set of strategies to help them understand the artistry of narrative, discourse and the rhetoric of fiction.

There is another example which more or less supports my thinking here.

Group 5

Ariel: The author's moral opinion expressed in the work may not be his real opinion.

Liz: How do you know? Who knows? Who can find out? Everyone thinks their own interpretation is right.

Ariel points out a common sense yet pertinent aspect of fiction writing, whereas Liz's challenge shows that she believes a work can be interpreted in many different ways. In one sense, the challenge makes sense, Abrams and reception theory have similar arguments (See Ch.2); on the other hand, however, the glib nature of her response also reveals a lack of basic understanding of literary poetics. Studies of some very basic literary devices such as point of view, irony, the unreliable narrator and the intrusive author can readily help the reader deduce whether the moral view being expressed is the author's real opinion. Due to a lack of knowledge, this participant adds an unnecessary layer of mystery to literary understanding and displays a certain contempt for authorial intent.

6.6 Literary Education

In the feedback of the questionnaire, 41% of the total of 78 students agreed with the statement 'the literary education I got at school was boring'. However, the percentage varies among the five groups quite significantly (Group 1: 50%; Group 2: 18%; Group 3: 68.8%, Group 4: 30%; Group 5 41.7%). And although almost one third of students (32% in total) chose to disagree, the

numbers here also varied widely among the five groups (Group 1: 22%; Group 2: 50%; Group 3: 18.8%, Group 4: 30%; Group 5 33.3%).

The students' educational background cannot be easily taken into account to explain the variations of response here. Although Groups 4 and 5 consisted of postgraduate students at Warwick University and share similar responses, Groups 1 and 2, students in the same college and majoring in the same course, present the most significant difference. As there is no consistent pattern in the data, it may suggest that both teaching and students' learning preferences vary.

6.6.1 Conventional literary education

In the interview, the students were asked to describe how literary works were taught at their schools. Most of the answers repeated the finding of the pilot study – 'dividing the text into several sections, summarizing the meaning of each section and then concluding the theme of the whole text'. In Chapters Two and Five I discussed the theoretical background and influence of this particular teaching method but some students provided illuminating feedback which explained it from another perspective.

Group 3

Freya: The time for the class is tight. The teacher has teaching objectives to meet; this is a quick way to do it.

Group 3

Shelly: It is exam-oriented. The pressure of the university entrance exam is there. You learn what the exam will test you on.

It seems that such a teaching method is a pragmatic choice. This text interpreting formula is easy to apply and fits the requirements of the standardised examination. The huge importance of standardised examinations in China, coupled with the political and ideological background of this literary education, appear to combine to impose a particular method of teaching literature in Chinese schools.

A student who was happy with his literary education claimed that he had benefited from a more relaxed educational environment.

Group 5

Patrick: I fortunately wasn't taught in the conventional way, which is probably because I went to a foreign language school¹⁶, my literary teacher didn't have too much pressure to push us into good universities. He knew we could get in anyway.

We cannot simply deduce that better schools in China have a higher quality of education, for students in Group 3, which demonstrated the highest level of dissatisfaction with their literary education at school, consisted of undergraduate and postgraduate students in one of the best Chinese universities. Considering the current situation in China, it is very unlikely that they could come from any below average secondary school to get into such a competitive university. A possible hypothesis could be – they learnt literary knowledge according to the national curriculum in order to fit the

¹⁶The foreign language schools in big cities are assumed to be the best secondary and senior high schools in China. Ironically however, this particular school in Nanjing that Patrick went to, which was free and open-minded according to him, provided Chinese teachers for the BBC programme *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School*(2015). In the programme, the Chinese teachers were seen to be very conventional, strict and tough according to the British students, parents and teachers.

requirements of the official exam in order to gain entrance to a good university, but they were aware of the problem and not happy with it.

6.6.2 The importance of the teacher

In the interview, I deliberately focused on the students who were happy with their literary education. Four gave me a detailed description of their literature class and what stands out in all cases is the significant influence of a good teacher.

Group 3

Freya: I was lucky; my teacher was open to try some new teaching methods.

Group 4

Patrick: (happy with education) simply because my literature teacher was the best in that school. His class was always interesting.

Group 5

Helen: One teacher at my university was really good. He had very good taste, a sensitive capacity for understanding literature, and liked sharing with us.

Group 5

Ariel: I had a good teacher. She brought lots of her own books to the classroom for us to borrow, and if someone did well in class, she gave the student a stamp, and once you had 20 stamps you could

have a book as a present from her. So we were all encouraged to read!

According to their feedback, the quality of a good literature teacher was perceived in different ways – as introducing new pedagogy, as having good literary understanding, a high standard of teaching, or for encouraging a love of books.

6.6.3 The drama elements in literature teaching

I asked the students to talk about their favourite parts of their literature classes. In their descriptions, I found that certain drama elements had already been applied in Chinese classrooms. The teachers might have done it deliberately or not, but according to the students' feedback, these attempts were accepted and even welcomed in the classroom.

Watching literary adaptations

Watching film adaptations as a supplement to teaching was mentioned by a small number of students. According to the survey, most of them (75.6% in total) agreed with the statement 'I like to watch plays/movies/TV adaptations of literary works'. Only two students in Group 3 chose to disagree. It is possible that, due to the drama background of the other four groups, those particular students tended to like dramatizing literary texts anyway. However, there were still 73.3% of students in this group who chose a positive answer. In the interview, the two students explained that they did not like watching dramatic adaptations not because of the dramatized form but due to their poor quality. As one put it: 'lots of adaptations are not faithful to my imagination of the stories, and some even ruined them.'

Scene work and role play

The other teaching method mentioned by some students was acting out a scene in the story.

Group 5

Toby: Sometimes the teacher asked us to play the characters in class. We adapted the story into script and got our own cast, then made a short play.

In the survey, only four students in total disagreed with the statement 'I would like to experience some characters' lives by acting them', spread equally across Groups 1,2, 3,and 4. Only a few students claimed that they were not sure (Group 1:1 person; Group 2: 1 person; Group 3: 6 persons, Group 4: 2 persons; Group 5: 2 persons). 37.5% of the students in Group 3 expressed uncertainty, which was the highest rate in the five groups. The other groups, which featured drama students, did seem to be more positive towards acting. However, even in Group 3, students who were willing to act fictional characters were still in the majority. One of these, who had never been trained in drama, expressed her fondness for this method:

Group 3

Freya: My teacher used to adapt a short play based upon the story in the textbook. We were asked to play the characters. It was a good way to understand characters, if you speak from a character's point,

the same content develops some new meaning that you didn't realise before. And it was fun.

I admit the figures only indicate that most students with a background or interest in drama enjoyed role play in class. But, as I argued in Ch.3, the target group of this research is young students, the common readers in higher education, who might be willing to study literature through dramatic methods, which naturally frames the potential participants in such courses as students who are not adverse to learning through drama. The figures above show that in my target group of students, scene work and role-play had been well received when used in class.

Context and characterization

Some students also mentioned that they had derived immense pleasure by engaging in stories, and that this had been enhanced when teachers had successfully helped them establish a strong context and a character's viewpoint.

Group 4

Patrick: My teacher was a very dramatic storyteller, good at creating the atmosphere, taking us into the context, and letting us feel as the character. At key moments, he would suddenly stop and ask us 'just imagine we were living 2200 years ago, standing in the palace of the most powerful kingdom, surrounded by hundreds of warriors with bows and arrows like a dark cloud, facing the tyrant king, as a lonely assassin with only a poisoned dagger, how is the feeling? What would you do?'

Although this teacher had been using a traditional form of teaching he had nonetheless managed to dramatize the scene in this student's imagination to such an extent that he could vividly recall it over five years later in this interview, which shows the context and characterization worked really well and certainly had affected his understanding.

The community

Reading literary works has normally been regarded as an activity that the reader does on her own. However, literature class will effectively work by creating a reading community. From the data, I also found it had certain strengths that the solitary reader could not experience.

Group 5

Nicole: I quite like group discussions as other people may bring some illuminating ideas you never thought about before. Someone might identify with one character, some with others. And when we argue, it deepens understanding. If you read on your own, you would probably only see the story from a single perspective, or just follow the narrator.

Nicole's answer reveals a significant point: that, as the fictional discourse of many short stories and novels is largely one of telling rather than showing, common readers without literary training are likely to have a limited response constrained by personal predilections which a group discussion can enlighten and expand. This group advantage can be developed in drama activities. The fictional discourse is mainly one of showing in drama, which can present multi-angled scenes instead of relatively limited points of view;

and well-designed drama activities can place the reader in the perspective of different characters.

Group 5

Toby: We used to sit together reading poems and felt the rhythm, the music of the language like a chorus.

Toby's point emphasises that the language of literature is not always supposed to be read quietly, that its aesthetic value may lie in its sounds, rhythms and musical qualities.

6.7 Conclusion

Reflecting on the research questions which guided this part of the research, I will now briefly summarize its outcomes according to four issues: 1) the role of socio-historical context in students' literary horizon; 2) edification and aesthetics in literary understanding; 3) the previous literary education that students had received; 4) the potential of participatory drama as pedagogy.

First, the data suggests that students in this research generally shared literary horizons deeply rooted in literary realism. The reflectionist theory had been widely applied in their secondary schools. New pedagogies for teaching literature would face a number of challenges, such as the exam-oriented educational culture, and the more general political and ideological purposes of education.

Second, students' understanding of edification in literature, especially with reference to sympathy and compassion, to some extent echoes the tradition of humanism. They were against didactic reading, and some were also

aware of the uncertainty and complexity of the edifying results of literature and of the importance of aesthetic effects. In contrast with this, students also showed a lack of knowledge of how to study aesthetic form. The study of poetics may possibly be a blank field in their shared literary horizons.

These two findings to some extent signal both the purpose and the challenge of my research and its attempt to introduce modernist literature and poetics in order to broaden their literary horizons and appreciate aesthetic value.

Drama as pedagogy may have potential to build up context, visualize scenes, explore characterization and establish a literary community. However, since modernist literature challenges the conventional values of literary realism, and introduces various narrative innovations, there remain a number of doubts – is it really possible to translate the narrative innovations of modernist literature into the form of participatory drama? Would role-play still be able to raise sympathy and compassion for characters if students' sense of 'universal values' and 'humanistic understandings' were being drastically offended by a modernist text? Is it possible to use the form of drama pedagogy to challenge the realist horizon and facilitate an understanding of modernist texts from a new perspective? Moreover, what effects might an attempt to develop a literary community in the classroom through drama have on the learning process? I proceed to address these questions in Part Two of this research through two cases studies whose outcomes will be discussed in the following three chapters.

Chapter Seven

Part 2 (1): Analysis and Discussion of Case One

This section presents the analysis of Case One, which applies participatory drama as a pedagogical approach to teach the modernist short story *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*. This chapter consists of three sections– the analysis of the original text, the discussion of the drama translation based upon it and the investigation of the teaching effectiveness of participatory drama as pedagogy.

7.1 Textual Analysis

The textual analysis of the original story in this chapter mainly focuses on issues of beauty and art. Reviewing relevant theories on beauty and aesthetics (Winston, 2010; Nehamas, 2007), the analysis is centred on problematic issues arising from Kantian aesthetics in the original text. Apart from the interpretation of content, which takes the hermeneutic approach, I also analyse the form of the original text from the perspective of poetics, including the narrative of the story which mixes the *nouvelle* (short story) and the *conte* (tale) (Czynaski, 1987), and ‘the exotic other’ as a poetic device.

7.1.1 About the Author

Marguerite Yourcenar (8 June 1903 – 17 December 1987) was not well known until she published what is generally regarded as her masterpiece *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (English: *Memoires of Hadrian*) in 1952. This novel, which illustrates the life and death of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, presents Yourcenar’s writing style –described by Bailey as exemplifying a profound

scholarly knowledge of classics and history, a remarkable storytelling skill and an original literary intellect with “elegant gravity” (Bailey, 2000, p.8). *Memoires of Hadrian* not only established her fame as one of the most distinguished writers of the twentieth century in the French speaking world but also laid the foundation for her being elected as the first female member of the Académie Française in its four hundred years existence. Readers in the French speaking world admire her as “France’s leading modern classicist” (Hokenson, 2004, p.277).

Yourcenar for her expertise on Asian culture, especially Japanese literature, is well known, which we can find in her study on Buddhism and her admiration and critical research on Yukio Mishima (Yourcenar, 2001; Hokenson, 2004, p.277). Although the chronology of Yourcenar’s works shows that Asian literature seems to be the focus in her later career, she developed her interest in the East at the very beginning (Hokenson, 2004). At the age of thirteen, she received a present from a traveller returning from Japan, a doll dressed as a lady of the Meiji era. Yourcenar recalls that it is “almost an idol rather than doll ... She opened me to the world” (cited in Hokenson, 2004, p. 463). She soon discovered the Far East and read all the Japanese literature she could find in the mid-1920s. Meanwhile, her museum visits and library studies also extended to Asian literatures, philosophies, and arts (Hokenson, 2004).

Yourcenar rarely commented about her literary origins, but her works reveal her erudite literary knowledge, far reaching in terms of both time and space. Therefore she is regarded as a ‘universalist’ (ibid). Although she disliked being labelled with any titles, whether as ‘classicist’ (because of *Hadrien*) or

anything else, 'universalist' does suit her literary commitment; in her own words: "I am French by culture. All the rest is folklore; ... But French culture, like all cultures, small or large, becomes sclerotic and sickly as soon as it refuses to be part of universal culture" (cited in Hokenson, 2004, p.463).

Hokenson(2004) claims that such a universal perspective on literature is associated with Yourcenar's cognition of humanity and aesthetics. Yourcenar believes that arts and literatures in different cultures share some sort of "essential fact" about what it is to be human. An enduring theme in her works involves complex thoughts on death and love, in which we can trace the strains of Greek philosophy and Buddhist culture, as well as the influences of her models from western classics and the Japanese literary canon. In other words, Yourcenar is aware of melting various literary traditions together to serve her own ends.

7.1.2 The Story

Oriental Tales

The short story I chose, *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*, is one of Yourcenar's early works, which is collected in the series of *Nouvelles Orientales*(English: *Oriental Tales*). This collection was first published in 1938. After being revised twice in 1963 and 1978, the current edition came out in 1985, which includes ten stories. The short stories in *Oriental Tales* are derived from pre-existing myths, legends and stories from the classical literature of so-called 'oriental culture' – Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, and Serbian. For instance, *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* is adapted from a Taoist fable of China and *The Last Love of Prince Genji* is Yourcenar's creation inspired by the missing chapter *Vanished into the Clouds* (雲隱) from the 11th century Japanese

canonical text, Lady Murasaki Shikibu's novel *The Tale of Genji* (1925). However, unlike other erotic tales that mainly focus on stories set in the Far East or Middle East, Yourcenar's oriental imagination is not limited to Asia. In this collection, the word 'oriental' is used very loosely for the final story *The Sadness of Cornelius Berg* is about the life of a Rembrandt's disciple and is set in Amsterdam. Although this story is not 'oriental' in any sense, Yourcenar presents the western painter's story as an opposite pole of the tale of a Chinese painter in *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*.

The Narrative Form

Each story in *Oriental tales* is about seven pages in length, apart from *How Wang-Fo was saved* and *The Last Love of Prince Genji*, which are twice as long. *Oriental tales* has its precedent as Yourcenar herself claimed in *Les Yeux Ouverts* (1980). In 1876, Gobineau published six romantic and exotic tales of Asia under the title of *Nouvelles Asiatiques*. Czynski (1987) suggests that although Gobineau's tales are longer than Yourcenar's stories, both of them take the form of a 'nouvelle', a narrative framework which embodies a short piece of prose, mainly focusing on a series of key events and central characters, and occasionally being enclosed within a prologue and an epilogue. Compared to the novel, which has more space for character development, Czynski argues that the narrative framework of a nouvelle has more static, monochromatically sketched characters, and the plot is also restricted to "a comic, or tragic, climax that surprises even as it is seen to be the inevitable outcome of the circumstances" (1987, p.303).

In the postscripts of different editions of *Oriental tales*, Yourcenar has offered authorial explanation on the origins and themes of the tales, and has briefly

talked about her reworking and retelling of those stories. According to Yourcenar's postscripts as well as his own reading of the text, Czynski reckons that Yourcenar deliberately applies the narrative forms of folk tale, myth and fantasia, in her retelling of those stories. The tone of storytelling as an old art form more or less has been kept in *Oriental tales*. Moreover, the storytelling voice in Yourcenar's tales does not merely act as particular rhetoric, but has the spirit of it. As Walter Benjamin (1999) claims, sharing experience, provoking wisdom of life, creating a tale through endless retellings, are all the features of storytelling. Czynski's comment on *Oriental tales* such as 'surprise renewed, wisdom gleaned, reflections provoked' (1987, p.304) suggests that the virtues associated with the tradition of storytelling finds its echo in *Oriental tales*.

A Brief Summary of the Story

Wang-Fo was a talented artist whose paintings were famous all over the Kingdom of Han. Ling, his disciple, became captivated by his art and ended up selling all his property to buy Wang-Fo his painting supplies. Ling's infatuation with Wang-Fo led to his wife's depression and suicide and eventually Ling abandoned everything in his past to wander around the country with his master. The emperor, who lived in the palace, grew up with the company of Wang-Fo's paintings, never being allowed to leave the palace, and came to believe that his kingdom was as beautiful as the pictures. When he finally left the palace, the ugliness of reality disappointed him and drove him to despair. He had his soldiers capture Ling and Wang-Fo and sentenced Wang-Fo to death for deceiving the emperor. Ling wanted to protect his master but was killed by the warriors. Before his execution, Wang-

Fo was commanded by the Emperor to complete an old painting of his. When he began to paint the sea it became real. Ling, revived from death in the painting, rowed a boat to help Wang-Fo escape. The tale ends with both the master and the disciple disappearing into the distance of the fantastic painting.

The Origin of Wang-Fo

In the postscript of *Oriental Tales*, Yourcenar claims that Wang-Fo is based on a Taoist fable of ancient China. I have tried to trace the origin of this story according to the clues that Yourcenar provided yet have not succeeded. The closest Chinese tale that I can find is the well-known Chinese children's story *The Magic Paintbrush*¹⁷ written by Hong Xuntao in the 1950s. In an interview, Wu Xiaodong (2009) talks about the reasons why he put Wang-Fo into the senior high school textbook (Beijing Version)¹⁸, and one reason is that the Chinese setting and the similarity to *The Magic Paintbrush* make the story familiar and accessible for young people in China. Indeed the main characters (a painter and an emperor) and the endings (the sea scene) in the two stories are very much alike. However other elements such as theme, characterization, aesthetic value and writing style in the two stories share nothing in common, something I will return to later. According to the date of publication, however, there is no way that Yourcenar could have been inspired by *The Magic Paintbrush*, for *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* was written

¹⁷In *The Magic Paintbrush*, Liang, a poor orphan boy, was granted a paintbrush by an old man, which can turn everything Liang draws into reality. The greedy emperor arrests Liang and forces him to paint a money tree. Liang draws it but in the middle of the sea. The emperor takes a dragon boat to sail to the money tree, and Liang draws a storm which drowns the emperor in the sea. I have previously co-authored an article which examines the Marxist elements of this tale. See Winston et al (2010)

¹⁸In Wu's words: "Yourcenar's *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* is a fairy tale set in ancient China, which is very similar to *The Magic Paintbrush* and quite readable" (2009, p.7)

over ten years earlier but the influence of *The Magic Paintbrush* is still worth noting. This children's story is so well known by most Chinese students that in young people's minds, the familiar feeling would naturally rise and comparison could consequently be made. In other words, *The Magic Paintbrush* does not affect Yourcenar's writing, but the reader's reception, especially a Chinese reader's perception of Wang-Fo's life.

Another possible origin of Wang-Fo is Wu Tao-tzu, the most celebrated artist of seventh century China, who has been regarded as the 'patron saint'¹⁹ of painting' in Chinese culture. Czyński (1987) suggests that our erudite author may well have read Arthur Waley's book *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting* (1923), which tells of how this great painter is said to have disappeared into an enormous landscape painting that Emperor Ming Hwang ordered him to paint.

In his book *the Myth of Wu Tao-tzu* (2012), the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist explores the mystery in Wu Tao-tzu's legend. He reckons that art provides us with a utopia, "a reality in which to disappear", and stepping into the painting is a symbolic representation that one can detach oneself from one's worldly life and enter an aesthetic paradise. In the preface of his book, Lindqvist writes: "What had been a means of attaining becomes a means of escaping... a desperate last way out of the prison of reality." Meanwhile, Lindqvist also mentions that such escaping reveals the solitary soul of the artist, and the act of vanishing shows his "courage to continue to be alone, on the other side of the visible in art." (2012, p.3).

During his lifetime, Wu Tao-tzu brought a fiery energy to frescos and

¹⁹In the original story, Wang-fo is regarded as a sage by priests.

paintings based on Buddhist and Taoist stories. As an artist, he was deeply influenced by the two different religions, which to some extent echoes the artist created by Yourcenar – being inspired by Taoism and being named as ‘Buddha’ (Wang-Fo, Wang is a common surname but ‘Fo’ means ‘Buddha’ in Chinese). Moreover, like Wang-Fo, great artistry does not seem to be the key thing that makes Wu Tao-tzu a legend; people tend to be more interested in stories about his genius and fantasise the magic power that he might have brought into his pictures. In other words, Wu Tao-tzu is also a deified artist like Wang-Fo. In *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*, a collection of stories published in the tenth century, Wu Tao-tzu becomes a painter with godlike skills which can bring things in the picture alive. The story of his Buddhist fresco *Scenes of Hell*, recognized as a major work in Chinese art history, is that it caused all the butchers and fishmongers in Chang’an to sell nothing because people were so frightened of retribution. Such stories on the one hand demonstrate the powerful impact of art, and on the other hand reflect the solitude of the artist, for, although he is certainly not unappreciated, there is a gap between his art ideal and the perception of his audience.

7.1.3 On Beauty

How Wang-Fo Was Saved is a work that involves metaphysical thinking on beauty as well as its influence on human existence. In a story about an artist, Yourcenar has asked almost all the questions that people have been asking about beauty as well as art. Throughout his entire life, the artist Wang-Fo is seeking for his ideal art and has been obsessed by beauty, which raises the question – does the ultimate beauty really exist? And what is it? Wang-Fo’s obsession with the image of things and people rather than with them in

themselves can make us wonder whether his belief in beauty is morally right or not. Does beauty really reside in the image of things or in the things themselves? Is the beauty in art relevant to reality? Wang-Fo paints a portrait of Ling's wife, which makes her beautiful look become a piece of even more beautiful art. But such a scarily beautiful portrait contrasts sharply with the woman's gradually aging face in real life. When the beautiful woman ends her short life, we may ask the question –what is difference between the immortal beauty of a great art work and the ephemeral beauty we find in the fragility of life and flesh? By indulging in the beauty of Wang-Fo's paintings, Ling is introduced to a new world of art, but his resulting unconcern for real life leads to his wife's suicide; the emperor derives immense pleasure from appreciating Wang-Fo's art works, but the beauty of art also causes great disappointment when he sees the real world. So another question might be - is beauty a blessing of happiness or a cause of misfortune and disillusionment? And finally, Wang-Fo and Ling disappear into the painting, an ending that can almost be interpreted as a symbolic redemption, but do beauty and art really offer such a refuge from the pains of life and, if so, how do we access it?

However, Yourcenar only presents all the questions without any answers. Her particular narrative style, as I mentioned above, is in the vein of the old art of storytelling, of the fine old legends, which is to present the story as the narrator sees it without leaving any authorial comment. The narrator is an enchanter like Scheherazade in *Arabian Nights*. Yourcenar veils all the author's opinions under such a tone, and leaves all the questions open to her readers.

The concept of beauty is a significant key point in this text, but beauty itself is a rather complex issue which has been studied and interpreted throughout the development of both western and eastern thought. In this section, I will take several aesthetic traditions as an approach to analyze the issue of beauty in Yourcenar's story. I have to clarify here that it is not trying to prove Yourcenar has been influenced by any particular aesthetic thoughts; rather my aim is to use these ideas to open up different possibilities to examine the ambivalence and complexity in the text rather than to interpret an original writer's work as a philosophy student's assignment.

Plato's Theory of Beauty

The discussion of beauty can be traced back to the origin of western civilization. The word for beauty in ancient Greek is *kalon*, which means a fine, pleasing, and admirable quality, but was more often applied to an idea, a moral virtue, or a deed rather than to art such as music, painting or poetry (Winston, 2011). According to Plato, the perfect form of beauty can only be found in *idea*, which is a pure, intelligible form. Plato believes that the 'idea' is more fundamental and hence more real than any physical realisation of it. The beauty of any particular people or object is temporary whereas the idea of their beauty is immortal and will never pass away. And art, especially imitative art such as painting, is merely an imperfect shadow of the natural world (Winston, 2010, p.12).

In the *Symposium* (1997), Plato describes the long quest for absolute beauty. He argues that eros, the Greek word for 'intimate love', is initially felt for the beauty of a lowly object, which could be a carnal love towards a person, but eros gradually drives us to appreciate the beauty within that person, and

even leads us to pursue the absolute beauty in the ideal sense, which for Plato is goodness and truth, “the life of philosophy itself” (Nehamas, 2007, p.2). In other words, it is a process that begins with a passion with a single individual and gradually develops into a pursuit of wisdom and virtue.

How Wang-Fo was saved was written in the 1930s when Yourcenar lived in Greece. According to her biographer Josyane Savigneau (1993), her life experiences in Greece as well as ancient Greek culture had a significant influence on Yourcenar’s exploration of the human spirit. Interestingly however, she creates Wang-Fo, a perceiver and creator of beauty, who has challenged Plato’s idea of beauty. At the beginning of this story, Yourcenar depicts an artist who only loves the beauty of image - “Wang-Fo loved the image of things and not the things themselves, and no object in the world seemed to him worth buying, except brushes, pots of lacquer and China ink, and rolls of silk and rice paper” (Yourcenar, 1985, p. 1). Perhaps the natural world in Wang-Fo’s eyes is the shadow of the idea of beauty as Plato claims, and Wang-Fo understands the ephemeral nature of such a form of beauty, but instead of making an imperfect shadow of the shadow, as Plato believes painters do, Wang-Fo turns the temporary beauty of the natural world into immortal art; in the Emperor’s words in the story, “mountains covered in snow that cannot melt”, “fields of daffodils that cannot die” (Yourcenar, 1985, p. 14). To Wang-Fo, the pursuit of absolute beauty is not through a longing for abstract ideas but by manifesting it in concrete appearance. In Jan Hokenson’s words, the pursuit of artistic beauty to Wang-Fo is “the aim of all life. Moreover, when achieved, artistic beauty is so real that one may die into it, into the misty realm of art between gods and mortal” (2004, p.296).

In the story, the beauty in Wang-Fo's paintings is obviously more appealing than the beauty of the natural world. Ling is obsessed by the portrait of his wife and completely ignores the poor woman herself. The Emperor is disappointed by the real world as it is not as beautiful as in Wang-Fo's pictures. But does this attraction lift the beauty of art beyond the beauty of nature? Is it really superior or is it rather seductive and deceptive? Moreover, is Wang-Fo's absolute beauty actuality more real? Wang-Fo uses a woman as the model for a prince and a man for a princess, because he wants his models to be "sufficiently unreal" (Yourcenar, 1985, p. 5). The Emperor is disillusioned after experiencing the size of the gap between art and real life and accuses Wang-Fo of lying to him.

Importantly, the quest for absolute beauty, as Plato argues, is a process of seeking for virtue and wisdom, which is driven by eros/love, and which promises intense pleasure in return (Nehamas, 2007). And eros is directed at intelligible forms – law, culture, philosophy - but not art. Yet absolute beauty for Wang-Fo has nothing to do with virtue. Both he and Ling (perhaps even including the Emperor) have immense passion for beauty, but it excludes everything other than beauty itself. Wang-Fo is more interested in the look of people who beg him for paintings to their real needs. When Ling's wife kills herself, Wang-Fo's eyes are captured by the colour of the dead woman's face. Such disinterested reactions are hardly virtuous in any sense. As to wisdom, Wang-Fo has taught Ling to enjoy visual images and to appreciate the beauty of art; but Ling's passion for beauty does not grant him any wisdom of life. As to the happiness that the pursuit of beauty promises, more doubts would arise – of course Wang-Fo and Ling enjoy peaceful pleasure,

but is that happiness? We can still see that Wang-Fo lives with the sorrows of a solitary artist. Ling's wife thinks her beautiful portrait is an omen of death and eventually commits suicide after suffering the effects of her husband's obsession with this picture. Here it seems that the beauty of art brings misfortune rather than happiness. Wang-Fo's exquisite paintings keep the Emperor company in his lonely childhood, but the beauty of the paintings also leads to the Emperor's disappointment with the imperfections of the real world. To the Emperor, a love of beauty seems to bring with it a disgust for the realities of existence.

The Aesthetics of Kant

Western thought on beauty was greatly influenced by Plato. However, the Aesthetic Movement in the nineteenth century supported separating aesthetic values from social, practical and ethical themes, which had always been a central concern in the Platonic tradition. Even John Ruskin, the most moralistic aesthetician among his peers, expressed this conflict in his advice to painters: "Does a man die at your feet – your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips.... Not a specially religious or spiritual business this, it might appear" (cited in Nehamas, 2007, p.3). And in the fictional world, Wang-Fo does exactly what Ruskin suggests.

The philosophical underpinning of the Aesthetic Movement comes from Immanuel Kant (Nehamas, 2007; Winston 2011). In his *Critique of Judgement* (1987), Kant provides a systematic and influential theory of aesthetic knowledge as well as a theory of the nature of pleasure in aesthetic experiences.

Kant's theory of aesthetics provides a different view to look at the perennial

problems of beauty, one which is in sharp contrast to the Platonic tradition. Kant argues that the key for understanding beauty “would not be found by looking at beautiful objects but by analysing our responses to them” (Winston, 2011, p. 19), because “the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation” (cited in Nehamas, 2007, p. 5). Hence such pleasure is a satisfaction isolated from any other interest. Kant’s point on beauty reveals a mistrust of passion. He separates beauty from human desire, distinguishes the beautiful from the ‘agreeable’ and the good- “We call *agreeable* that which GRATIFIES us, *beautiful* what we just LIKE” (Kant, 1987, p.52). The agreeable is related to the common things we enjoy in our daily lives – ice cream, silk, a lovely house and so on, which gives us pleasure and makes us want to possess them. And the same attitude goes towards good things, because “they are either useful or morally valuable” (Nehamas, 2007, p.4), whereas if one enjoys something that is beautiful, that is purely an aesthetic pleasure without sensual, practical and ethical concerns. We think a painting is beautiful not because we are sexually attracted by the naked person in the picture; a Zen temple is beautiful not because it provided residential space for monks; a literary work can be beautiful even if the author conveys a morally offensive view, because none of these concerns have effects on the aesthetic value of the beautiful things that we are judging.

Kant’s disinterested view on beauty echoes the unworldly outlook Wang-Fo has towards the real world. Wang-Fo is a Kantian artist in the extreme sense. He pays no attention to any of the agreeable pleasures, only indulges himself

in aesthetic pleasure and hardly has any moral or practical concerns. He privileges his spirit over his body, and his view of beauty is Kantian, “completely isolated as it is from all relationships with the rest of the world, (which) promises nothing that is not already present in it, is incapable of deception, and provokes no desire” (Nehamas, 2007, p.10).

Arthur Schopenhauer also discussed the relationship between human desire and beauty. He proposed that earthly desires cause pain for they can never be fully satisfied, whereas beauty, especially the beauty of art, acts as a liberation, which helps us to escape from the disturbing desires of ordinary life. Schopenhauer’s argument is that art and beauty lift us above our desires, provide us with refuge, and free us from being trapped in the travails and limits of the everyday. Wang-Fo and Ling are in poverty, but the beauty of art shelters them from human desire. Not only is Wang-Fo indifferent to fame or fortune, but also he is not emotionally inclined toward anyone or anything. At the end of the story, it is art that helps him and his disciple triumph over the Emperor’s will. It is presented as the ultimate power in the earthly world, which can be read as a symbolic way of expressing that art and beauty grant people an especially powerful form of spiritual freedom.

However, Yourcenar’s attitude towards Wang-Fo is rather ambiguous and intriguing. She tells this story in a detached narrative voice, which neither appears to be sharing nor criticising Wang-Fo’s aesthetic viewpoint. She problematizes Kant’s view on beauty by pushing it to its extreme. The very concept of ‘disinterestedness’ in Kantian aesthetics has damaged the life of Ling’s wife, because a woman’s humble wish for worldly happiness cannot compare with the pure aesthetic pleasure to be found in beautiful art. In

addition, the Emperor's anger is almost an ironic response to Schopenhauer's argument – the beauty of art makes the Emperor desire too much. Instead of being lifted from the travails of life, he is forever trapped in his disappointment with how they contrast with the beauty of art.

7.1.4 The Eastern View

The Exotic Other

How Wang-Fo was Saved is set in Ancient China, and, as I have explained, its origin is a Taoist tale and Wang-Fo's name suggests a Buddhist reference. Can any Asian thought on beauty be seen to have inspired Yourcenar's writing?

Although Wu Xiaodong selected this text for the chapter on modernist literature in his senior high school textbook for its familiar setting, he argues that, as a Chinese reader, he still feels the inner atmosphere is "exotic" and its aesthetic contemplation is based upon the thought of "the Other" (2014). He explains that in Yourcenar's view, the nature of beauty can be appealing but also devastating, which is rarely seen in the Chinese aesthetic tradition, for Chinese culture tends to prefer beauty in a moderate, natural, and harmonious way (ibid).

Wu's argument can be contested, however. Firstly, Wu's point about 'the Other' comes from Edward Said's study on orientalism. Orientalism, Said indicates, is "a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness" (1978, p.6). It is deeply rooted in the context of Imperialism and Colonialism, and exotic peoples, haunting landscapes and fantastic romances constructing an imaginary "Other", which aims to draw a distinction between the rational

Occident and the irrational Orient. Said explains that the two present “a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (1978, p.5).

However Yourcenar herself is well-known for her expertise, enthusiasm and great respect for Asian culture. Her outlook on the East cannot be simply categorised as oriental fantasy. When Hokenson reviews Yourcenar’s short story *The Last Love of Prince Genji*, she compares Yourcenar’s writing with her contemporaries’ imitations of Japanese literature, and criticises that the latter present “impressionistic exoticism but little knowledge of the aesthetic – let alone metaphysical – bases of the genre” (2004, p.296). However, Hokenson does not think that is the way Yourcenar writes; on the contrary, she reckons that the French woman disappears in the Oriental story she retells. In *The Last Love of Prince Genji*, Yourcenar not only recreates the tone and the style of Lady Murasaki’s writing, but also shows a deep comprehension of the narrative structure and aesthetic principles of *The Tale of Genji*.

However, I admit that in Yourcenar’s text, ‘oriental images’ do exist, especially in the Palace scene. The Imperial Palace is beautiful, mysterious and exotic; none of her descriptions exist in real Chinese history. But I have chosen the approach of poetics to analysis the oriental elements. I suggest that the author fantasizes the setting of ancient China to suit the particular narrative voice. The oriental setting works as a poetic device. The oriental images in the tale are rather similar to the Chinese Palace in *The Emperor and the Nightingale* (1925) by Hans Christian Andersen or Kay Nielsen’s illustrations for *Arabian Nights* (Irwin, 2010), which work to establish a world

of fantasies, to blur the boundary between the real and the fictional; therefore the supernatural scene becomes possible and the character can manage his fantastic escape in the end (More details are presented in the analysis in Ch. 9).

The Views of Buddhism and Taoism

As to the difference between the aesthetic traditions of the west and the east, I suggest that this story does contain certain influences from Asian philosophy, religion and aesthetics, especially from Zen Buddhism and Taoism. Both Zen Buddhism and Taoism originated in China, and have had great influence on Japanese aesthetics, especially its most important concept “The Way of Art” – *gei-do*. (Tsukamoto, 2007, p.122). Yourcenar, as an expert in Japanese art, literature and aesthetics, would very likely be familiar with it and the story of Wang-Fo also reveals certain aspects of this tradition.

The Buddhist view on human suffering echoes Arthur Schopenhauer’s argument in some ways. The Buddha believes that all the suffering of mankind originates from our own desires and, even if our desires can be satisfied, the satisfaction is only temporary. And the Buddha teaches us that the solution is to liberate us from earthly attachments, which is a lifelong religious practice (Gombrich, 2005).

Moreover, the well-known Buddhist statement in *The Diamond Sutra* says: “All phenomena are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow, Like dew and lightning. Thus should you meditate upon them.”²⁰ Yourcenar has applied this wisdom in her thought about the nature of beauty. Through the

²⁰In Chinese: 一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如电，应作如是观

voice of Prince Genji, the author sighs:

“In a universe where everything passes as in a dream, we would resent happiness that would last forever. I am not sorry to know that objects, beings, hearts are perishable, because part of their beauty lies in this very misfortune.” (Yourcenar, 1985, p.66)

The same sorrow about beauty can also be found in *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*. The death of Ling's wife illustrates the fragility of beauty and the truth that its short life is doomed to pass. Wang-Fo understands how perishable beauty is in the natural world; hence he is not emotionally inclined towards those illusion-like beings, and calmly looks at fragile beauty passing away.

According to Yourcenar (1985, p. 109), the original story of Wang-Fo is a Taoist tale. However, the Taoist aesthetic is indeed rather different from Wang-Fo's belief in beauty. According to the famous viewpoint on beauty made by the Taoist philosophers Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu, Taoism values the beauty of nature more than artefacts (which echoes Plato) and this worship of nature is based upon the very fundamental underpinning of Taoist philosophy (Tsukamoto, 2007, p. 122). But Tsukamoto argues that in Japanese the concept 'The Way'²¹ is more than an aesthetic concept but a moral view (ibid). The central precept of the Taoist view is 'non-doing' (Tsukamoto, 2007), to follow rather than to go against the great law, since “restless striving, in his many plans and projects, even in his prayers and sacrifices, resists, as it were, this law, obstructs its path ... Only when a person has become like a tree or a flower, empty of all will or purpose, will he

²¹Gombrich has a simple but clear explanation of this Taoist concept: “In all the world-in wind and rain, in plants and animals, in the passage from day to night, in the movements of the stars-everything acts in accordance with one great law. This he (Lao-Tzu) calls the 'Tao', which means the Way, or the Path.” (2005, p.61)

begin to feel the Tao.’ (Gombrich, 2005, p. 61), This Taoist moral may provide another perspective from which to look at Wang-Fo’s disinterested view towards earthly life – he tries to capture the beauty of nature through his art without any utilitarian purpose, as painting is as natural as breathing to him; he empties his desires and sees other people’s strivings as in vain. From this perspective, Wang-Fo’s unmoved response to people’s requests could be explained as a form of Taoist ‘non-doing’, which is not immoral but rather a different moral viewpoint, detached from the restless desires of the human world.

7.2 Planning the Scheme of Work

The textual analysis in the last section has provided a brief account of my understanding of this text. The analysis of the drama scheme below will present my attempt to translate this into a number of participatory drama exercises. In this section, I will particularly focus on a series of issues related to beauty / art, including the relationship between art and life, beauty and truth; the conflict between aesthetic value and moral value; the function / meaning of art and the viewer’s perception of art.

Taking the approach of poetics, I have also tried to demonstrate the mix of narratives (short story and fantasy) through the form of participatory drama. This attempted translation is related to a number of issues like ‘the exotic other’, ‘the real and the fictional’, ‘crossing the boundary’, which emerged from the other case as well. Therefore, I will analyse and discuss them together in the first half of Chapter Nine.

7.2.1 Pre-existing Understanding of Art

The drama workshop begins with Mantle of the expert (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995). The drama setting for this exercise is in an art museum, where a painting is being exhibited that is regarded as a peak achievement in Chinese art history. Students are divided into pairs, one as the guide in the museum and the other as a visitor. The guide has to explain to the visitor about the fictional painter and his work (See Appendix B).

This exercise intends to help students to think about absolute beauty in their own minds before they engage with the story. Absolute beauty or beauty in the most superior form is a metaphysical question, which would be really abstract for students to discuss. This fictional context in drama is intended to help their thinking.

Jakobson's structuralist model of verbal communication (1988, p.144) can explain:



In this exercise, the **ADDRESSER** (the guide) has to send a **MESSAGE** to the **ADDRESSEE** (the visitor). They both use the same **CODE** (modern Chinese), and take the means of **CONTACT** (a face to face conversation). In

this exercise, the dominant function of language is the referential function - the message in the conversation focuses primarily on the context, as both of the participants are talking about the painting and the painter. Moreover, the context of visiting a museum also determines that the conversation is taking place between an expert and a common visitor; hence the message has to be informative, comprehensive, engaging and friendly, but not too scholarly or 'showing off'. The phatic function and poetic function also play important roles in this conversation. As to the phatic function, the message focuses on contact as well. The face to face conversation allows interaction, which means it is not only one talking about her ideas of perfection in art as the other can agree, make enquiries or express doubt, and even challenge those ideas. The role of the addressee/visitor therefore serves to push or help the addresser/guide to re-think and improve her thoughts. In addition, the participants also make use of the poetic function of language by focusing on the message itself. Anyone with experience of visiting art galleries knows the normal pattern that a museum guide applies when explaining to visitors, which includes talk about the life of the artist, the historical background, the composition of the picture as well as further details, the theme and the back-story of it, the style and its influence, famous critics' reviews and so on.

In this way, what could have been an abstract issue on beauty has become specific. By describing the fictional painter and his work, students are being asked to organize their understanding of beauty and art, and then make a coherent argument to convey their ideas. The poetic function of language provides them with a pattern to arrange the points in their speech. More importantly, this pattern invites students to engage in thinking of beauty and

art naturally and spontaneously. By describing the image - the details of the art work - as well as interpreting them, they have to think about the relationship between form and meaning; how the visual beauty represents an idea of beauty. When they are trying to introduce the author's life and the back-story of the work, they may well use their understanding about the role of social-historical background in the creation of art, they also need to think if the life (or story) of the artist affects our judgment of the art work. Moreover, the so-called 'best painting' in this exercise is supposed to be representative of the well-established aesthetic values in our society, which involves several questions for students to consider: how does a society choose its 'classical art'? What are its features? Is beauty one of the standards in our evaluating system? And last, students have to think how to make other people appreciate beauty, how to make art accessible to ordinary people.

Instead of listing those questions and letting students have a discussion, what drama does is to integrate them into a fictional context and provoke a discussion around them. Students get into those thoughts unconsciously. Their ideas may only stay on the surface, but they still use their knowledge and life experiences to build up a model of absolute beauty and its creator, and in the following drama activities, they are intended to use their own model to compare with Wang-Fo. Their horizon of expectation may be challenged, and this experience can be viewed as one of going through a process of aesthetic distancing.

7.2.2 Metaphor: The Aesthetic Pleasure

The evening that Wang-Fo and Ling first meet in the tavern is the moment of awakening for Ling; his eyes are opened and start to perceive beauty in his life that he had ignored before. Wang-Fo's words have a striking effect on Ling's vision as if he were enchanted. But how do those words enchant a man's view?

In this scene, Wang-Fo describes the objects and people that he sees. His words form vivid and innovative images. From a literary view, we see many metaphors - the wine stains on the tablecloth look like withered petals; a bush is compared to "a young woman letting down her hair to dry" (Yourcenar, 1985, p. 5). Those metaphors are visually appealing, but in a purely aesthetic sense. None of them would cause us any desire to possess these objects.

According to Kant's viewpoint, Ling becomes aware of beauty only once he meets Wang-fo. Kant distinguishes 'the beautiful' from 'the agreeable' as I discussed in the last section, hence Ling's fortune, his lovely house and garden, as well as his pretty wife "of a crystal-clear heart" (Yourcenar, 1985, p. 4) only provide him with 'the agreeable' - practical use, sensual enjoyment, sexual pleasure, emotional attachment and virtuous compassion, but none of them is appreciated as true beauty. Only when he starts to follow Wang-Fo's descriptions to observe the colours, the lines, the shape of people and objects does he empty his earthly purpose, desires and will from those things and gain a view that coincides with 'disinterestedness' as Kant calls it. Only then does he start to see the beauty in his life.

Therefore, I devised the exercise of using a still image to present a metaphor, in which students move in small groups and freeze as if they are to make something as seen by Wang-Fo in the story – a rather ordinary thing in daily life which looks extraordinary in Wang-Fo's view. To make the still image work, two instructions need to be noted.

First, once students choose the everyday object that they will work on, they have to focus on its image only. For example, in this exercise, a lamp is not for lighting and an umbrella is not for providing shelter; we only need to consider their shapes, colours, and light and shadow. Second, the new image in the artist's eyes is appealing only because it looks beautiful, not because it is sensually attractive or practically useful in a way which makes you want to possess it. Hence a metaphor such as a stack of hay looks like a huge gold ingot would indicate an improper response to this exercise.

7.2.3 Different Response to Kantian Aesthetics

The experience of beauty, as Kant describes it, has excluded other purposes and appetites apart from aesthetic value. In this story, Wang-Fo and Ling practise the Kantian view of beauty in an extreme way. In the story, by seeking for true beauty with his master, Ling gives up all his earthly life, all the 'agreeable' things like his fortune and belongings, including his wife. The suicide of Ling's wife is a significant key point, which opens up a feature of Kant's aesthetics - that his theory of aesthetic pleasure as well as 'disinterestedness' present us with an ethical challenge.

I devised a few drama activities intended to explore this complex issue (see Appendix B, Drama Scheme 1, Exercises 4 and 6). In Exercise 4, students

get into groups of three and one takes the role of Ling's wife, the others as someone that Ling's wife might meet in the story. The task is that Ling's wife is looking for help to cure her husband's obsession with Wang-Fo's art; meanwhile the other participant has to comfort her, and to give her advice on how to solve the problem. Due to the context (ancient China), there are very limited choices of people for Ling's wife to have a conversation with. We can almost assume that she would choose from a family member, especially parents, a female friend, her maid, and a monk or a Taoist priest she would meet in a temple. Each one of them would have their own value system and their own way to look at beauty. The family would probably have a Confucian view that beauty should inspire longing for virtue rather than be obsessed with pleasure, which echoes Plato's idea of beauty to some extent. The friend and the maid may come from a female and earthly perspective, which shows the conflict between the earthly needs for an agreeable life and the longing for beauty in a disinterested sense. The monk or the Taoist priest represents Buddhist or Taoist values. Although Buddhism and Taoism as religions and philosophy are immensely complex, their fundamental viewpoints on human desire, the pain of existence and how to gain relief, as well as those on formative beauty, have influenced Chinese thought, whereas Wang-Fo and Ling represent Schopenhauer's point that beauty lifts them from earthly desires. Both sides have their understanding of beauty and desire, and this exercise is intended to allow participants to explore their similarities and differences in a conversation.

Being in role means the participant has to apply the character's thought and talk like him/her. Therefore, in this exercise, students are actually using different understandings of beauty to rediscover Kant's aesthetic.

To achieve this intended outcome, students would need certain basic knowledge about the Confucian school, Chinese classical literature (the abandoned woman is a classical theme in poetry), Buddhism and so on. Although they should be common sense for any educated Chinese, I am aware that the young generation may know very little about them (See the section on the current situation of Chinese literary education in the literature review chapter). However, at least this drama activity can show the huge gap between Wang-Fo and Ling's views on beauty and how ordinary people understand their behaviour, which reflects the solitude of the artist.

Exercise 6 focuses on the concept of disinterestedness. In the text, ordinary people believe that Wang-Fo has the magic power to bring his paintings to life, so they beg him to paint for them, whereas Wang-Fo only enjoys watching their expressions as various emotions shape them. I dramatized this scene, students worked in pairs, one as Wang-Fo, the other as a character in need; he/she had to try everything to beg Wang-Fo to paint what he/she wanted, but Wang-Fo was only to treat him/her as a model, and keep commenting on how various emotions made them appear and make suggestions for them to alter or emphasise them in their appearance. In other words, he treated their entreaties solely as models for his art

People come to Wang-Fo with their earthly desires; the conversation between those people and the unworldly artist is in fact a conflict between the

agreeable/ useful/ good and the beautiful. This drama exercise embodies people's desires for different objects. The different roles make Wang-Fo's disinterested response morally ambiguous. Some desires may cause us great sympathy, such as a heartbroken husband who wants his wife to come back to life, a mother who wants a magic herb to save her poor child from dying; whereas some sound unreasonable, for example, a greedy lord asking for more fortune and lots of beautiful women. Wang-Fo offers everyone neither sympathy nor criticism. All he is interested in is the expressions of their emotions.

This exercise aims to examine two things. One is like the previous exercise, focusing on people's 'misunderstanding' of beauty and art as serving a practical purpose; the other is trying to examine the ethical challenge that 'disinterestedness' may encounter, and the dubious contention as to whether art and beauty can really liberate people from desire or not.

7.2.4 Beauty and Happiness

According to Schopenhauer's argument, never satisfied desires in human life cause pain, but beauty, especially the beauty of art, lifts us above earthly desires and the limits of the everyday. Wang-Fo and Ling have exemplified Schopenhauer's point, for they are both indifferent to fame or fortune, and enjoy the peaceful pleasures rewarded by beauty and art. However, the Emperor's experience is the opposite, the beauty of art makes him expect too much from the real world. In the palace scene in the original text, the Emperor makes a long speech accusing Wang-Fo of lying to him. Although the original text mixes in the element of fantasy, the overall narrative still

strictly follows the logic of realism until the very end, which means in the context of the story Wang-Fo as a humble man cannot argue with the Emperor for it is challenging his ultimate authority. In the drama scheme, I designed an exercise called Wang-Fo's trial, in which Wang-Fo can have a chance to argue about his understanding of the relationship between art and reality, to explain the purpose and meaning of art creation from the perspective of what I understand to be a Kantian artist; this in-role interaction between Wang-Fo and the Emperor may also raise discussion on a number of questions, such as why the viewer's perception towards the object in the real world is different from the artist's; whether the artist should take any responsibility for the viewer's perception of his work; what should we look for from a piece of art work?

If the interaction between Wang-Fo and the Emperor attempts to solve the Emperor's disillusion from the Kantian viewpoint (which obviously fails), then the following exercise 'persuasion' (See Appendix B, Scheme 1, Exercise 8.3) is trying to redefine the function/ purpose/ meaning of art from a variety of other standpoints. Students in role as people in the palace, persuade the Emperor not to kill Wang-Fo. According to the context, students can choose to take on the role of characters like a high official, the eunuch, the Empress Dowager, the Emperor's wife (or other relevant characters that they can imagine). Each character may have a particular understanding of art/ beauty from his/her own background. For example, the high official may take the tradition of Confucianism; the old Empress Dowager could be a committed Buddhist; the Emperor's wife may be a cultured lady with good taste (like the heroines in *Dream of the Red Chamber*), and the servant / eunuch can

represent common people again, but his philistine opinion has to come with cunning rhetorical skills. Pleading for the Emperor's mercy, all the characters have to present their reasons. Therefore, the process of the persuasion is to put the discussion of art and beauty within a broader interpretive community.

7.3 Analysis of the Teaching Practice

This section provides the analysis of the data collected during the teaching practice. In the teaching, I mainly focused on two key topics: 1) the theme of beauty and aesthetics in the original text reflected in the drama design; 2) the problematic issues arising from Kantian aesthetics raised within the story.

The key questions guiding the analysis of the teaching practice were:

- What are the effects of the drama exercise on facilitating the students to engage in issues pertaining to art and beauty in the text, especially the disinterested view of beauty in Kantian aesthetics?
- To what extent has the students' previous education affected their understanding of beauty and art? How do these understandings find expression in their drama work?
- In what ways do the communal drama exercises challenge students' aesthetic views?

In the analysis, I could not address those questions in a neat order because one drama exercise could also raise a number of relevant theoretical concerns or several could be relevant to the same issue. Therefore, the analysis is structured within a more flexible framework leading off from the

major drama exercises. However, my analysis of the students' responses will be guided by the above questions.

Due to the lack of teaching experience, and the students' relatively weaker education background, the teaching results with Groups 1 and 2 did not produce much informative data. Therefore, most of the data analysed in this section are drawn from Groups 3, 4 and 5.

Moreover, apart from analysing issues that emerge from the questions above, this section will also focus on unanticipated issues that emerged from the data, in order to fully explore what Stake refers to as the *emic* and *etic* issues in case study research (1995).

7.3.1 Metaphor

The drama exercise of metaphor (See Appendix B) aims to introduce the idea of aesthetic pleasure to students by asking them to imitate Wang-Fo's metaphor – comparing a bush to 'a young woman letting down her hair to dry'. My initial understanding of this metaphor was just comparing a daily object to something beautiful. Therefore, in early drama teaching with Groups 1, 2, and 3, the teacher's instruction was only – 'to compare an everyday object that looks very ordinary to something different and visually beautiful'. However, during the teaching process, from the mistakes the students made as well as the quality of their final presentations, I found that there were more subtleties in the original text that I had overlooked and that these elements were in many ways the key to making the original metaphor - as well as this drama work.

In the five groups, only a few students provided metaphors that captured a similar aesthetic effect of the metaphor in the original text. For example, in Group 3 some compared a water well in the grass to a shell button on a green dress, a pair of necking swallows to kissing lovers; in Group 4, two girls presented an image of umbrellas blown over by the wind transferring into a picture of flowers in the rain; in Group 5, a girl student used her back to show the image of a wine bottle turning into a back shadow of an elegant lady with a long neck. By analysing them as well as other still images, which were less successful, I discovered what was missing from the instructions I gave.

First, this exercise is practising a metaphor rather than a metonymy, which means the relationship between the tenor and vehicle is based on resemblance instead of their contiguity. In the original text, Wang-Fo compares a bush to a young woman. In this metaphor, 'a bush' as the tenor and 'a young woman' as the vehicle have no logical contiguity but only physical similarity between each other, which is the same in all the still image work that I mentioned above. However in Group 4, two students made two images, the first was a pair of chopsticks (tenor), and the second was two bamboo stalks. One of them explained the meaning of their still image.

Group 4

Lynn: Chopsticks are made of bamboo, I think they look similar.

However, anyone who has seen chopsticks and bamboo stalks would know that the only similarity in their appearance is that they are both long, straight, tube-shaped objects. And the reason - 'chopsticks are made of bamboo'

suggests a contiguity (association) between the two, hence the image tends to be metonymical, and loses one important feature of metaphor. It is the physical similarity between the tenor and the vehicle that strikes the imagination more vividly. Hence, the work of this group did not achieve the artistic effect of metaphor.

Second, this metaphor should be based upon the 'physical' not the 'inner' beauty, or the beauty of 'appearance' rather than the beauty of 'soul'. Wang-Fo's metaphor only focuses on the physical image; the practical use of the brush (the tenor) and the sexual attraction of the young woman (the vehicle) are not his concern. In the example of the chopsticks and bamboo stalks, the same student, Lynn, explained why she chose the image thus: 'bamboo is the symbol of a gentleman in Chinese culture, which signifies integrity and dignity'.

In the work of Lynn's group, the beauty of the image lies in the cultural implications of bamboo rather than the physical appearance of bamboo itself; moreover, the cultural implications – 'gentlemen', 'integrity' and 'dignity' – suggest beauty in a moral sense, her metaphor presenting virtuous beauty instead of physical beauty.

In Groups 1 and 2, students compared a wine cup to a golden ingot, a mountain to a woman's breast. Apart from the possible reason that students may have been being deliberately unco-operative here, neither of the two metaphors presents beauty in any sense, for one is based on materialistic appeal and the other on erotic attraction.

Reflecting again on the metaphors of umbrellas suggesting flowers, and the wine bottle a lady's back with a long neck, these are focused on physical resemblance, exclude all the practical function of the tenors, and suggest vehicles that are appealing for their visual qualities only, not for any agreeable or erotic features. Hence these metaphors were accurate imitations of Wang-Fo's in the original text, a disinterested view of beauty.

Third, I also found that physical beauty and inner beauty are not incompatible. If the still image meets the precondition of physical resemblance between the tenor and the vehicle, the similarity of the 'inner' beauty or the beauty of the 'soul' can enrich the interpretation of the image. For example, in Group 4, two students compared a broken pillar in an ancient ruin under the sunset to an old soldier sitting alone in a battlefield after a war, as if gazing at the sunset of an empire. In this metaphor, the shape of the broken pillar looks like an old soldier, the historical ruin resembles the space of the ancient battlefield. Beside these similarities of physical appearance, the broken body of the pillar also echoes the wounds that the old soldier has suffered during the war, as well as what is left of his wounded life. The sunset, more than a visual image, is compared to the passing of glory, the decline of empire. This metaphor presents a poetic image, which creates not only visual appeal but also an atmosphere of history and a sense of time. The physical resemblances in the metaphor present a visually vivid image to the audience, which well meets the instruction of this exercise, but it is the 'inner' similarities between the broken pillar and the old soldier, between sunset and decline, that add the content to this image that makes it emotionally striking. The success of this image raises new questions that could be explored within

the theme of this story – If Wang-Fo had painted such a picture, would he feel the sense of time and history like we do? Is it possible for an artist with such a disinterested view to present an emotionally striking picture?

7.3.2 Art, Beauty, Desire

In the textual analysis, I proposed that Wang-Fo is a Kantian artist in the extreme sense. Kant distinguishes beauty from the agreeable and the good, holds a disinterested view on aesthetic pleasure, which explains why Wang-Fo privileges the pursuit of beauty over any moral virtues and worldly desires. However, Yourcenar has an ambiguous and intriguing attitude towards the concept of ‘disinterestedness’ and raises various doubts about it in the original text. In Exercise 4 & 6 (See Appendix B), the students became involved in the discussion of these relevant issues.

The Agreeable and the Beautiful

In the original story, the beauty in Wang-Fo’s art has a great effect on Ling’s life, like an awakening. A Kantian interpretation would suggest that this is about a man with an agreeable earthly life whose sudden apprehension of disinterested beauty empties him of worldly will and purpose. In the story, Ling is obsessed by a portrait of his wife painted by Wang-Fo, and prefers the painting to the woman herself. Based on this plot, I designed a drama exercise (See Appendix B), in which Ling’s wife goes to various people for help, including her family, friends, maid, fortune teller and a monk / nun in a Buddhist temple.

In the five groups, the students who played the wife's family, friend and maid first tried to explain Ling's behaviour from their characters' perspectives. The reason they most provided was that Ling's wife was no longer sexually attractive to her husband. Such as:

Group 5

Nicole (as parent): Man by nature loves beautiful women. The woman in the picture is always beautiful.

However, the reason of 'man's nature' suggests the 'agreeable' sexual appeal. Following this logic, a real woman is certainly more 'sexually appealing', more suits a 'man's nature' than a picture, so the wife should be more attractive to Ling. But it is not the case.

During the interaction, some students were evidently not convinced that such an argument held, and in role, they pointed out its logical flaws.

Group 3

Vera (as friend): Oh it is just *man's nature*. He looks at you every single day. It's rather normal for a man to get a bit ... err ... 'aesthetically exhausted'.

Freya (as Ling's wife): I change my dresses and my makeup everyday but the picture is always the same. If he gets fed up, he should get fed up with the picture not me!

Vera's words like 'man's nature' and 'normal for a man' suggest that the reason was the wife's decreasing sexual attraction and the sensual appeal of

the picture. The wife played by Freya pointed out the contradiction in her friend's logic as well as Nicole's – the substitute Ling finds provides even less sensual pleasure than his wife, why does he go for that? Is it beautiful in a different way? Another interesting finding in this interaction is Vera explaining Ling's behaviour as being 'aesthetically exhausted', by which she meant he is bored of his wife's agreeable appeal. But according to Kant, the agreeable has nothing to do with aesthetics, for aesthetics is about the beautiful. The misuse of the term suggests that in the common reader's mind, the two concepts of the agreeable and the beautiful are likely to be mixed up together.

As to the advice for Ling's wife, the students had two different attitudes. Some of them applied the moral principles of Confucianism to persuade Ling's wife to obey her husband's will, and pointed out that Ling's obsession did not contain any moral or sexual indecency and therefore should be harmless.

Group 4

Lynn (as maid): He is not seduced by any other women, even the painting is your portrait, so, after all, he is fascinated by you.

Linda (as parent): Women should obey their husbands; he hasn't done anything unacceptable or immoral, at least it is much better than going to a brothel.

However, other students who played the same characters accused Ling of 'absurd behaviour'. They expressed their confusion as well as trying to explain it from the characters' viewpoints.

Group 3

Sally (as parent): How could one possibly prefer a live person who can smile and talk to an image of her on a piece of paper?

Group 4

Jessica (as friend): We are flesh and blood. How can we possibly be beautiful every single moment, like a picture?

Group 5

Liz (as parent): If you see someone who looks exactly the same as the woman in the picture you love, what would you do? Of course you would go and get the woman! Who wants to sleep with a picture?

They saw the problem of Ling's wife as a battle between the woman and her portrait. The advantage and disadvantage of the woman is the same - she is a live person, her beauty comes along with sensual or sexual pleasure, but the fragility of the human body cannot defeat the everlasting beauty of a work of art. Consequently, the family and friends provided similar advice: to dress up exactly as she was represented in the painting, because 'he would feel the painting had come to life'; or to dress up in different ways every day – 'try to be even more beautiful than the picture'.

Interestingly, when the students talked from their own perspectives after the role-play, some still expressed the same opinions as the characters, while one pointed out that the advice they had just provided would not work.

Group 5

Tara: Those efforts would be a waste of time. Ling has become obsessed by the portrait, but what exactly is he obsessed about? Not any woman. He is just fascinated by the pure beauty, the aesthetic effect that Wang-Fo has created, which just happens to be embodied as this particular woman's image.

Tara's responses present the conflict between 'the agreeable' and 'the beautiful'. Kantian aesthetics makes a great barrier between the two ideas, whereas most people (at least those characters) in ordinary life would not have such a distinction in mind (See Vera's misuse of 'aesthetic' in Group 3, discussed above). The agreeable would satisfy our practical needs and sensual appetites, and inspire the desire to possess, especially if it involves sex; whereas the beautiful provides a disinterested experience, which is disassociated from desire, and Ling's feeling towards the beautiful painting does not contain any sensual purpose. Therefore Lynn and Linda said, whilst in role, that Ling's wife should not feel threatened, for she, as the 'agreeable' one does not encounter any rival even more agreeable, especially in a sexual way. And the students' imaginary competition between Ling's wife and the picture could be interpreted as an articulation of the philosophical battle between the agreeable and the beautiful.

To most people, the agreeable and the beautiful are both important in different ways. In a later exercise Wang-Fo's trial (See Appendix B), the teacher in role as the Emperor said that the real world becomes ugly compared with the beauty in Wang-Fo's art. One of the students spoke:

Liz (in role as Wang-Fo): Everything in my paintings is supposed to be seen only - you can't eat or touch any of them. Your kingdom has its good aspect. You can really enjoy a nice dinner and sleep with real women, whereas you can't do that with any of my pictures.

Liz's response shows that the agreeable has significant meanings in our lives, which the beautiful cannot provide; it is wrong-headed to compare which one is more important than the other. In Group 4, this drama exercise inspired a discussion. Reflecting on their response to the drama exercise, the students talked from their own viewpoints. One of the students expressed an opinion which is very similar to Kant's view of the nature of beauty.

Plato or Kant?

Wendy: I wonder if Ling loves his wife no more than loving a beautiful object. Once he finds something even more beautiful, he switches his love to that. He has never loved her as a woman, as his wife, as an individual human being. I feel it is like objectifying women, it's very sad.

Student participants used the word 'love' many times. Wendy believes that Ling's love for his wife is confined to a love of bodily beauty, which has not led to the love of the woman herself. Plato's argument of eros (love) and

beauty discussed in the textual analysis is relevant here in what Wendy is implying. Plato believed that one can be attracted by the beautiful look of a single individual, which can gradually inspire the appreciation of the inner beauty of that person. Wendy does not mention, as Plato does, that the love of beauty leads to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue. She does see a love of bodily beauty as lacking in some way, and the love of beauty in an intelligible, emotional form as more superior, at least in Ling's marriage.

However, it is possible that Ling once loved his wife as a woman with thought and feeling, in the way that Wendy wished he should. The switch of love from a woman to a painting is probably not a change from bodily beauty to a substitute that is more agreeable, but a sublimation from worldly desire to the obsession of a purer or idealized form of beauty. Here we can see the divergence between the Platonic tradition and Kantian aesthetics.

The Disinterested view

Exercise 6 (See Appendix B) was designed for helping students to explore the disinterested view of Kantian aesthetics. In the original text, people in the kingdom of Han believe that Wang-Fo has the magic power to make pictures come alive and various people (farmers, lords and priests are mentioned in the original) beg Wang-Fo to paint things that they want. With each group, I asked the students what these things would be. Groups 1 and 2 both listed various things that ordinary people might ask for, whereas Groups 3, 4, and 5 made similar lists but also gave me a clear answer – 'something that embodied their desires'.

The students worked in pairs, one as Wang-Fo, and the other as the person begging for something from him. One was to try to get the painter to sympathise and agree to help; the painter's job was to comment only on the poor fellow's expression or gesture. The exercise was intended to bring the worlds of desire and disinterested contemplation into conflict with one another. I asked the students to improvise a dialogue and emphasised that Wang-Fo should only tell the person how to pose. I have to mention that with Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4, some students in role as Wang-Fo ignored my instruction and started to persuade or argue with their partner in role. Therefore with Group 5, I gave a clear instruction that Wang-Fo should say nothing apart from commenting on the begging person's appearance, and asking him/her to pose, which they did effectively, and this also led to an intense debate out of role once they had finished the exercise, which I will analyse later in this section.

Many students expressed feeling towards this painter. The most direct feeling was incommunicable.

Group 5

Toby: My god, I want to break his neck!

Tara: I got angry! Seriously! I begged him like a dog, he never listened!

Group 4

Jessica: He is completely incommunicable!

Linda: He lives in his own world. I felt so powerless talking to someone like him.

Apart from the communication problem, some students accused Wang-Fo of being 'inhuman', especially the ones who played a disadvantaged character such as a starving farmer or a desperate mother.

In Group 3, a girl student played a handless mother begging Wang-Fo to paint a pair of hands so she could hold her baby in her arms. Whereas the painter replied very calmly, 'stay still, I hardly ever see despair and hope on the same face.' The girl who played the mother talked about her feelings afterwards, 'that is so, so outrageous. Is he really a human being?! Does he still have a human's heart?!'

In both Groups 3 and 5, there were two students who both compared Wang-Fo to Kevin Carter, the photographer who won the Pulitzer Prize for a photo, in which a starving toddler was shown trying to reach a feeding centre with a hooded vulture landing behind (See Appendix D).

Group 3

Vera: I think some artists are ready to trade humanity off for art works.

Group 5

Toby: They (Wang-Fo and Kevin Carter) only try to make their picture visually striking; they don't care about those people's feelings.

The Kantian theory disconnects beauty/art from practical need, sensual desire, and moral purpose. In this exercise, the artist Wang-Fo faced a moral test, and his disinterested attitude really upset and even annoyed most of the students in the five groups. It is worth nothing that the students hardly used words like 'moral' or 'ethical', but criticized Wang-Fo from the perspective of humanity. In its extreme, the Kantian concept of disinterestedness removes beauty from the earthly world, which is exactly the space that human emotions and desires inhabit. In Ch.6, I showed how many students took the view of humanism to understand literature and art. This exercise presented the disinterested view in an extreme way, which greatly challenged their moral and aesthetic understandings, exemplified in Group 5's debate that lasted for a good twenty minutes. Below, I have selected a few representative opinions to analyze.

Toby: I think Wang-Fo as a character is very controversial. His coldness is against the role of an artist. He is a person who can find beauty in ordinary things. How can such a person have no sympathy toward misery and sadness on earth? I think anyone who can find beauty must have a soft heart, which is not sentimentality, but compassion and empathy, and a care for other people's lives.

Robin: Artists are human beings first and foremost; living in human society means you have certain responsibilities towards other people.

Toby integrated the creation of art with sympathy, empathy, compassion and care. Her insistence on the importance of ethical content is in the counter-

tradition of the aesthetic, which according to Richard Posner (1998), originates from Plato. The contemporary critics in this tradition such as Martha Nussbaum have championed the significance of liberal arts for cultivating humanity, especially for helping people understand and sympathize with others (Nussbaum, 1995, 1998, 2010). According to Posner (1998), this edifying tradition is diverse but shares a commonality—"unwilling to grant any value to literature that contains immoral ideas"²² (1998, p. 307). This view is very similar to Toby's, which excludes Wang-Fo and his art from the legitimate art world.

Robin's response related the artist to human society. Her opinion emphasized the responsibility of the artist. She might possibly have the social function of art in mind here, which is significant in Marxist literary criticism, but I also think that she is including the artist's personal morality in her evaluation of art, which is quite a common understanding in the counter-tradition to the aesthetic (Posner, 1998, p.307).

Helen: Aesthetic accomplishment and moral accomplishment should be separated. Artists with both are actually very rare. Some artists like Oscar Wilde only try to pursue art as the essence of beauty. Moral value should be advocated, but mustn't be the criteria for evaluating art.

Helen's viewpoint is from the aesthetic tradition. She used one of the most celebrated figures in the nineteenth century Aesthetic Movement, Oscar Wilde, to justify her point. This movement accepted Kantian aesthetics and

²²Although both the edifying school and Posner's arguments are about literature, their opinions can be applied in the discussion of art in general as well.

particularly celebrated the detachment of aesthetic from moral concerns (Winston, 2010, P.22). Helen also clarified that aesthetic values need not be pitted against moral concerns, but argues that the proper criteria for evaluating art should be aesthetic rather than ethical. However, in interview later, I found that although this student held such a viewpoint, her knowledge about the aesthetic tradition was limited to the ‘Art for Art’s sake’ movement. She excluded moral judgement but introduced ‘humanity’ as an important standard for literary valuation (See Ch. 6, section 6.5.2). The perspective of her reading was still from human experience, the key feature of the common reader.

Daniel: Most people would think Wang-Fo is cold-blooded. But I think it is more like the detached view of an artist. Your sorrow and your pain belong to you; my interest is only how to present those feelings. There are so many artists like Wang-Fo, but he goes to an extreme.

Daniel’s phrase ‘the detached view’ is exactly that which modern aestheticians apply to describe the disinterested approach to art creation. His understanding of Wang-Fo’s feeling (“your sorrow and your pain...my interest..”) echoes a the quote I cited earlier from John Ruskin in his advice to painters to not help the dying man at their feet. However, Daniel is more ambivalent in his moral stance to Wang-Fo’s extremism.

Daniel: Artists can be very arrogant, extremely self-centred, and only focus on their own world.

Tara: We’ve seen so many people like that, terribly annoying.

Daniel: Yes, but from the point of art, they need to absolutely concentrate their attention, then they provide fantastic works. But those people may not be able to communicate with the earthly world.

Tara and Daniel both had educational backgrounds in classical music, which might have provided them with personal experience (“We’ve seen so many people like that”). In the five groups, although some students expressed some understanding of Wang-Fo, they were the only two who gave his character any real sympathy. They both clarified that they did not like ‘self-centred’ artists as people in real life (‘very arrogant’, ‘terribly annoying’), but understood them as artists. In interview, Tara said, ‘I know his feeling, his struggle, and his solitude. I’m not as talented as him, but I have experienced those things myself.’ Their particular background provided them with a different interpretive community and horizon of expectation from other students, which helped them to engage in the story, and share the character’s life (More discussion in Ch. 9).

Art and Illusion

In my initial drama design, the exercise ‘Wang-Fo’s trial’ (See Appendix B) focused on the issue of the perception of art/beauty, and the relationship between art and reality. This drama exercise set up the context that the Emperor accuses Wang-Fo of telling lies through his paintings, which raises certain key questions: whether art reflects real life or not and how a viewer should perceive art, especially with regard to his/her experience of the real world.

In the textual analysis and the design of the drama scheme, I worked on the original text through the lens of beauty as theorised by Plato, Kant and Schopenhauer. Yet the students' responses to the exercise went beyond this theoretical territory, and brought in fresh perspectives. In order to analyze these responses, I consulted the theory of pictorial representation and the perception of art in the work of Ernst Gombrich. Therefore, the section below will begin with a brief summary of his theories as they relate to the data emerging from the exercise. I will then proceed to the analysis.

1) Gombrich's Theory of Schema

Imitation theory, which originated in Ancient Greece and was revived in Renaissance Italy, dominated pictorial representation in Western culture until the mid-nineteenth century (Gombrich, 1960). This theory argues that artworks, especially painting and sculpture, should imitate the visual appearance of the real world (ibid) and that they are, in effect, imperfect shadows of reality. The Platonic idea of art fits neatly with this tradition (Nehamas, 2006; Winston, 2011). Therefore, creating realistic images or likenesses were crucially important during the period when this understanding of art was prevalent.

However Gombrich, integrating several influences including classical scholarship, cultural history, and psychology, presents a new theory to explain how human beings form their conceptual understanding of the world. In *Art and Illusion* (1960), he introduces the mode of schema and correction. Gombrich proposes that the artist "begins not with his visual impression but with his idea or concept" (1960, p. 62). This conceptual understanding of the

world in the mind of the artist is called a 'schema', and the schema can be formed by a variety of elements such as preconceptions about art, the cultural tradition in which the artist is immersed, and the techniques that he/she acquires. Later the artist will compare this schema to their direct observation of the world and correct it so that it fits with this observation, a process which Gombrich calls "making" and "matching". Artists from generation to generation will continue this process, making further adjustments which become absorbed into a developing artistic tradition. From this perspective, Gombrich sees the artist as an active agent - "painting is an activity and the artist will therefore tend to see what he paints rather than paint what he sees." (1960, pp. 73)..

As to the viewer's response to the pictorial representation, Gombrich reckons that we are "watching our imagination come into play, transforming the medley of colour into a finished image" (1960, p.199). Such imagination, or our human perceptual tendency, is described as "illusion" by Gombrich, and he regards the viewer's perception as an active interplay based on a set of conditions (1960, p.172). As viewers, we project our expectations, formed by our knowledge of art and reality, into the works. Through projecting a motif tentatively on to a framed view, we test, confirm, correct or reject our interpretation. This process is strongly reminiscent of the theories I considered with relation to how we read a literary text, especially those relating to 'interpretive community' (Fish, 1980), 'horizon of expectation', and 'aesthetic distance' (Jauss, 1970).

2) The Limits of Likeness

In the exercise of 'Wang-Fo's trial' (See Appendix B), the Emperor's expectation of beauty makes him wishfully think that art should be just like the real world, a rather extreme understanding of art as imitation or reproduction of reality. When students were in collective role as Wang-Fo, they defended the artist by arguing how he saw the natural world as a painter and how he reflected what he saw in his pictures. The interaction between Wang-Fo and the Emperor in this exercise can be viewed as Wang-Fo demonstrating his schema and his experience of comparing this schema with his direct observation of the world. The Emperor, however, understands that art is supposed to reflect the real world truthfully, which echoes the reflectionist theory of literature, and the naturalist or realist tradition that these students were so familiar with. Therefore, by pushing this naturalist idea to the extreme, and deliberately putting students on the opposite side of the argument, the exercise worked to force them to rethink the idea that art reflects reality.

Interestingly, however, most of the students seemed astonished by the idea. After the Emperor's speech, I let students have a short discussion about their immediate feelings. In all five groups, students generally thought the Emperor's accusation was 'unreasonable'. Freya in Group 3 and Jessica in Group 4 put it clearly: 'you can't take the word "truthful" so literally!' Helen and Ariel in Group 5 called the Emperor 'completely mad' and 'insane'.

Such responses do not prove that they were against the reflectionist theory or the realistic/naturalistic tradition, of course. On the contrary, in the drama

interaction, I found that most of the students in the five groups held the opinion that the purpose of art is to 'reflect / reproduce nature and life' but in an 'indirect', 'imaginary', 'poetic' or 'symbolic' way. As for 'being truthful', they lifted the standard of fidelity from physical resemblance to the spiritual level, for they reckoned that physical likeness is only a 'superficial' and 'literal' understanding of truthfulness.

Group 3

Freya: Being truthful is not to present 100% likeness, but to present the inner spirit of things or people that you see.

In role as the Emperor, I challenged Freya's answer – 'the real spirit of your art is beautiful, whereas the nature of life is ugly, so you are still unfaithful, even on the spiritual level.' Freya answered that the artist has to eliminate flaws in order to present an artwork. In Group 4, Jessica, who has a theatre background, expressed a similar point (that art reflects the spirit of reality) but answered my challenge with an example that she drew from her acting experience.

Group 4

Jessica: It is like an actress crying on the stage, she can't just let herself burst into tears, which looks awful. But she feels the character's real pain internally and conveys the emotion precisely to the audience. How can you say that's not faithful?

Jessica's example of acting, especially the idea of feeling the character's internal emotion, comes directly from Stanislavski's training methods, of

course. His influential theories and practices, in the tradition of realism and naturalism, have dominated modern theatre in China for decades (Brandon and Banham, 1993, p.52-53). Jessica had inherited from this tradition her understanding about how art relates to reality. She concluded her opinion as below.

Jessica: Art is from but beyond life.

Interestingly, this opinion was repeated in exactly the same words by seven different students from across the five groups. It is a famous saying in China, yet not many people know that it originates from Mao's talk at the Yan'an Forum on literature and art²³. (I only found out later and Jessica did not know, either!) Mao argued that art reproduces nature and life through active creation instead of simply copying. On the one hand it follows the tradition of Marxist criticism - that social life is the origin of art - and on the other hand it emphasizes the role of the artist as active agent. As the Chinese philosopher Li Zhehou argues in his book *An Intellectual History of Modern China*, Mao's Yan'an talk is based on the Marxist theory of historical materialism and can, along with a series of literary/art reforms of the Yan'an period²⁴, be viewed as "a crucial turning point in the history of art in contemporary China. These reforms, in terms of art creation and the newly established dominant theory they promoted, have influenced contemporary Chinese society in

²³ "Although man's social life is the only source of literature and art and is incomparably livelier and richer in content, the people are not satisfied with life alone and demand literature and art as well. Why? Because, while both are beautiful, life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life." (Mao, 1942)

²⁴ Yan'an is a small town in northern Sha'anxi province. It became the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party from 1936 to 1949. The Yan'an period refers to the years between 1937 and 1945 when the Chinese Communist Party was preparing for political power.

subsequent decades”(1987, pp.246). Jessica and the other students were quoting Mao’s words naturally, like a proverb, which demonstrates how ubiquitous their influence has been.

From some of the students’ responses, then, the schematic style that they set up for Wang-Fo can be seen to emanate from the naturalist/realist tradition, which reflected their own cognitive structure, revelatory of how the aesthetic conventions in their social/cultural life were shaping the conceptual structures in their minds.

2) The Artist’s Observation and the Viewer’s Perception

There were, however, students who expressed different understandings other than realism.

Group 5

Ariel (speaking as Wang-Fo): The world is beautiful; it depends on how you see it. In my eyes, the world is just like my pictures.

A similar point - that ‘beauty depends on the eyes of the viewer’ - was made by students in all five groups. Although Ariel used ‘see’ and ‘eyes’, what she meant is more than the visual impression on people’s retinas. Wang-Fo observes the world as ‘beautiful’ because of his conceptual understanding, his schema, which, in Gombrich’s words, is “a mental set which makes the artist look for certain aspects in the scene around him” (1960, pp 85-6).

Therefore, in role, I pushed these students to answer how this miracle of the artist’s eyes works.

Group 3

Nick: You have to see things with imagination.

Group 5

Helen: I paint my understanding of the things I see. I paint my own heart.

Most of the students were like Nick, Liz, and Helen; they used very brief words such as 'my imagination', 'my understanding' and 'my heart' to explain an understanding of art as self-expression. But two students managed to give me more detailed answers and one even presented her answer as a vivid experience of creating artworks.

Group 5

Liz: I live in my own world, and I paint that world instead of reality, but that is a spiritual world, it has to take the form of real objects, but real objects are not what I am painting.

Group 5

Tara: What I paint is my feeling towards the object at that particular moment. As a painter, I use certain colour because the colour matches my feeling at that moment. If I choose blue, it is not because the colour of the object is blue, but my feeling towards the thing at that moment can only be illustrated through the colour of blue.

Group 4

Linda: Different people see my pictures in different ways, which I can't control.

Group 3

Nick: It is you who chooses to see my pictures in that way. You get tangled in your illusion and can't get out, that's not my fault. You see the world ugly because you are an unhappy person, because your life makes you unhappy.

Gombrich(1960) makes a powerful argument against John Ruskin's famous concept of 'the innocence of the eye'²⁵. He reckons that the way we see and depict the world may be affected by many factors such as experience, practice, interests, and attitudes, a theory that would explain why Linda and Nick – and those students who made similar arguments - were indicating that the same image could be viewed in many different ways.

The Buddhist View and the Confucian View on Art

In the exercise of persuasion (See Appendix B), I asked the students to make a defence for Wang-Fo in the voice of a person in the palace. This exercise aimed to use different characters' backgrounds and standpoints to bring the discussion on the meaning/function of art into broader interpretive communities than were actually present in the drama classroom. In the five groups, students chose a variety of roles such as the Emperor's teacher, a

²⁵In *The Elements of Drawing*, John Ruskin writes that 'The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the innocence of the eye; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify, — as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight.'(1991, p.22).

servant, the Empress, the Empress Dowager and the ghost of the Emperor's Father. Their responses provided some Buddhist and Confucian understandings of art, and, although their drama work did not provide a platform for them to demonstrate a thorough understanding of those ancient thoughts and philosophies, they still managed to present an understanding of art that evidently was drawing from the perspective of their own cultural heritage.

Group 4

Lynn (Servant): Your Majesty, why don't you send Wang-Foto your people? They may feel life is hard; it is comforting for them to see some hope in my pictures. Maybe they need illusions. (Emperor: A good Emperor shouldn't deceive his people.) But you let them read Buddhist sutras; you don't really believe heaven exists, do you? Just let those poor things feel better.

'Illusion' is a word used in Buddhist sutras very often and usually refers to the earthly desire that people try to pursue but are doomed to lose, as The Diamond Sutra's famous ending says, and which I have referred to in the textual analysis. In Buddhist terms, Lynn's use of the word 'illusion' is signifying that the beautiful images of art are impossible to find in the real world, but immersing ourselves in them comforts our souls and helps us to endure the pain of life. This viewpoint echoes (without being exactly the same) Schopenhauer's point that people's desires are beyond their grasp, but that art lifts us from everyday life and helps us find a form of tranquillity in the contemplation of beauty.

In Group 5, Tara and Daniel in role as the Emperor's teacher gave a long rhetorical speech. The key defence they offered for Wang-Fo was that the Emperor should 'use Wang-Fo's paintings as a blue print for building an ideal society'.

In Group 4, Jessica and Ophelia in role as the Empress Dowager, and Toby and Helen in role as the ghost of the Emperor's father, both expressed a similar point:

Group 4

Jessica & Ophelia: Wang-Fo's paintings present the image of the ideal society in your father's mind.

Group 5

Toby & Helen: Wang-Fo's paintings upset me indeed, too. But soon I realised that the beautiful scenes in the paintings show me the ideal society that a monarch should spend a whole life pursuing. Every time I see those paintings, I feel overjoyed. I wish you might learn how to be a good emperor by looking at those paintings, searching for the ideal society for your people. That is the way a good monarch should be.

The idea that good art helps establish an ideal society is deeply rooted in Confucian aesthetics. In *Analects* 16:5, Confucius says that "One stands to be improved by the enjoyment found in attuning oneself to the rhythms of ritual propriety and music" (1998). Confucians associates the moral with the

aesthetic, and indicates that practising good art helps with self-cultivation, an essential process for establishing a good state.

Since the whole drama exercise ‘Wang-Fo’s trial’ took place within the context of ancient China, students spontaneously applied a number of details to make their work fit this context, such as imitating old-fashioned discourse and performing ancient etiquette in the court. These acts raised new issues for further investigation, which I go on to present in Ch.9, as they are issues that pertain across both cases. What I have demonstrated in this section does, I think, provide some validation for the use of participatory drama to approach this story. Its themes of art and beauty can be seen to have connected intimately, and in varied ways, with the students’ sometimes confused and contradictory feelings and opinions about the nature of beauty and the purpose of art. The drama workshop served to bring out these feelings into the open. Students voiced them, sometimes forcefully, in response to the extreme positions that Yourcenar’s story explores. A skilful teacher could now harness this sense of connection with the story so as to lead them to the text itself with at least a spirit of curiosity and interest.

Chapter Eight

Part 2 (2): Analysis and Discussion of Case Two

Chapter Eight presents the analysis of Case Two, which utilizes participatory drama as a pedagogical approach to teach the modernist short story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*. This chapter consists of three sections – the analysis of the original text, the discussion of the drama translation based upon it and the investigation of the effectiveness of participatory drama on teaching this particular text.

8.1 Textual Analysis

In the section of textual analysis, I try to combine the two different approaches of literary study considered in the literature review - hermeneutics and poetics. The textual analysis in this chapter aims to interpret meanings through form (hermeneutics) whilst taking attested meanings and effects as a departure point to analyse how they are achieved (poetics). The analysis particularly focuses on Borges's idiosyncratic ideas on literature and philosophy as well as his original narrative techniques reflected in this text as modernist literature, which present the potential challenges they may bring to teaching practices; these include Marxist literary education in China as well as the drama pedagogy I use in this research project.

8.1.1 About the Author

Jorge Luis Borges (24 August 1899 – 14 June 1986) was an Argentine short story writer, poet, essayist and translator, who has been considered as one of the most important figures of twentiethcentury world literature. In 1923, he published his first book *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, which is a collection of poems. But most of his best-known short stories were written in the 1940s and collected in his books *Ficciones (Fictions)* and *El Aleph (The Aleph)*. These short stories are categorised by some critics as fantasies (Bloom, 2002), a term with which Borges himself has agreed²⁶. Most of the imaginative fictions that he wrote are based on influences and reflections on previous literary works rather than real life experience. In these stories, Borges sees the intellect as “adventure”, the mind as “passion” and life as a “dream” (Alazraki, 1987, p.2), and invites the reader to join this mysterious literary voyage. His fictions convey highly complex and paradoxical visions and dimensions, and often share formative images such as dreams, mirrors, compasses, labyrinths and encyclopaedias. Considering the intensive scholarly allusions, the labyrinthine narrative structures and the sophisticated philosophical thinking in his works, leading literary critics have described Borges as “the labyrinth maker” (Barrenechea, 1965), “the creator of memorable labyrinths and fantasies” (Bloom, 2002, p.12), “the author as librarian” (Updike, 1965, p.62), and “a modern master” (De Man, 1964, p.55).

²⁶In an interview of *the Paris Review*, Borges says that he shares Joseph Conrad’s belief - “when one wrote, even in a realistic way, about the world, one was writing a fantastic story because the world itself is fantastic and unfathomable and mysterious.” (Christ, 1967).

8.1.2 The Borgesian Style

From Impressionist to Phantasmagoria

Borges has made a highly significant contribution to the writing of short stories in the Twentieth century. Harold Bloom (2000) claims that modern short stories have two tendencies – to be either Chekhovian or Borgesian, but rarely both. The Chekhovian stories are impressionistic, in which perception and sensation play an important role. The author shows “impressionistic glances at the truths of our existence” (2000, p.57). Bloom reckons that the reader enjoys a personal relationship with those tales; through the reading process, she may experience aesthetic entertainment as well as self-enlightenment. Writers like the early James Joyce, Flannery O’Connor, Thomas Mann and Henry James can be categorised as writing in the Chekhovian tradition of short story writing. However, since phantasmagoria was brought into modern storytelling by Franz Kafka and mastered by Borges, the image of short story writing in the twentieth century has greatly changed.

Bloom indicates that unlike Chekhov, who tells story through a lonely voice in the human world, Borges narrates in voices haunted by a great amount of literary references, with his stories embracing and reflecting literary precursors. The personal relationship between the reader and the text in the Chekhovian tradition does not exist in Borges’s writing, for Borges enchants his readers by impersonal forces. Literary critics generally acknowledge that the core of Borges’s aesthetics is unreality (Bloom, 2000; Bell-Villada, 1999; Boldy, 2009). Bloom points out that Ana María Barrenechea has made the

most brilliant point on Borges's style - "Borges is an admirable writer pledged to destroy reality and convert man into a shadow" (cited in Bloom, 1995, pp.470-471), a point that echoes Borges's own words. In his preface to *The Unending Rose*, Borges writes that a writer's prime obligation is owed to the "imagination, and not to the mere ephemeral circumstances of a supposed 'reality' " (cited in Shaw, 1983, p. 255).

The Narrative - a Poetic Success

Paul de Man reckons that almost all of Borges's short stories share a similar "mirror-like structure", and he regards this very unique style as a 'poetic success' (1964, p.59). Unlike the mirror of the realists, who aim at reflecting the real world, De Man thinks Borges is a sceptic who always tries to transform and enrich his literary predecessors and to create infinite mirror-effects, which reflect those literary predecessors in different times and spaces. For instance, in *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, Menard, a twentieth century Frenchman decides to rewrite Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. His recreation contains chapters that are verbally identical with the original, yet at the same time convey different meanings, as Menard's *Quixote* is about a modern Frenchman's thoughts written in the style of a seventeenth century Spanish author. In De Man's words, "Mirror images are indeed duplications of reality, but they change the temporal nature of this reality in an insidious fashion" (1964, p.60). By structuring various phantasmagorical reflections, Borges creates a complex set of parodies and ironies.

The intensive textual permutations in Borges's story reflect his attempt to create a sense of the infinite by referring to a vast array of relevant books

and knowledge. However, Michael Evans reminds us that Borges applies such intertextual allusions not for challenging the reader to trace each quotation and thus risk becoming lost in a vast literary game; on the contrary, his narrative approach aesthetically serves his particular philosophical idealism. “The main object of the narrative”, Evans argues, “is to convey a sense of the indeterminate and the infinite” (1984, pp.277-8).

The indeterminate and the infinite are permanent subjects in Borges’s short stories, derived from his obsession with the theme of time. In his essay *A New Refutation of Time*, Borges illustrates his understanding of this everlasting theme in his works. Unlike our conventional experience, which sees time as continuous and infinite, Borges denies the continuity and causal connectivity of time; instead he sees each moment as individual. He gives an example that in August 1824, Captian Isidoro Suárez decided the victory of Junín whilst De Qincey published a diatribe against *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, however the two events knew nothing about each other.

Therefore, he argues, “Each moment is autonomous”, “each moment we live exists, but not their imaginary combination” (2000, p.258). However, Borges believes there is a mysterious relationship between each individual moment and he attempts, in his fictions, to signal common features and similarities in different times that remain deeply mysterious rather than rationally connected. Instead of using causal connections and chronological order, he prefers the idea of repetition and circularity – “these tautologies...make up my entire life ... they are repeated imprecisely” (2000, p. 259). Hence, Paul de Man compares Borges’s view of time to the universe. For the universe is “stable but chaotic”, and there is a binding, spatial substance that holds the

universe together; in Borges's world there are "a finite number of isolated events incapable of establishing relations among one another", (De Man, 1964, p.60). And Italo Calvino also reveals his fondness for Borges by expressing a similar point – "I love his work because every one of his pieces contains a model of the universe or of an attribute of the universe (infinity, the innumerable, time eternal or present or cyclic)" (Calvino, 1996, p. 119).

The idea of writing a fiction as the universe may sound fascinating but also paradoxical. Is there really a narrative that can enclose a story with infinite possibilities within a finite length? His use of intertextuality and the mirror-effect it creates realises an aesthetic sense of the multi-dimensional nature of time. Michael Evans refers to the intertextual elements in Borges's stories as 'intrusions' rather than 'allusions', since intrusions can invade the text and "fracture it into a mosaic of separate but echoing parts" (1984, p.69). Such mosaic fragments within the text are discontinuous moments whereas the echoes among them form the mirror-effect, the mysterious, repeating, circular nature of Borges's world. And the 'mirror-effect structure' also aims to create a repeating, spiral model of time, as Borges himself explains as "the style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities" (cited in De Man, 1964, p.60). That is why Pierre Macherey reckons that the narrative of a Borges story is like a book which exists "only by its possible multiplication" (1978, p.77) – externally it is implicitly related to all other books and internally it is a library itself. The vast sum of literary allusions indicates "not only the one that he could write, but those that others could have written" (1978, p.79).

In addition, the narrative has to work in a suggestive, implied way. If Borges had tried to write down everything that he could have written, he might never have been able to complete one single story. In Borges's most well-known story *The Garden of Forking Paths*, Doctor Albert spends his whole life making a labyrinth, which is an endless novel that attempts to exhaust all the possible outcomes of every event simultaneously. Albert's novel perfectly exemplifies Borges's multi-dimensional vision of time, but it could never be written. Fortunately, Borges provides us with an authentic solution – instead of getting lost in the infinite labyrinth or the boundless garden, he chooses to write very short texts; all his stories are only a few pages long and are written with great economy of expression. In Harold Bloom's words, Borges writes "romance fragments" instead of romances. "His art is carefully controlled and sometimes rather evasive" (1995, p. 471). His stories appear like literary criticism, critical allegories of incomplete or missing books, containing many clues that cannot be traced. Macherey explains that it is the absences that put the story into endless self-conflict, for "the real labyrinth is that there is no longer a labyrinth: to write is to lose the labyrinth" (1978, p.82). This is what Paul de Man calls a poetic success: through art he paradoxically creates something finite, with order, to give shape to ideas of shapelessness and the infinite.

In the following sections, I will give a close reading of the story *Theme of the traitor and the hero*. The text itself exemplifies my discussion of Borges's narrative.

8.1.3 The Story

A Brief Summary

The short story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* is set in the context of revolutionary Ireland. On the eve of a rebellion in Ireland in the year 1824, Kilpatrick, the young, charismatic, patriotic leader is assassinated in a theatre. One hundred years later, his great-grandson, Ryan, is compiling a biography of the hero's life. He tries to discover the identity of the assassin. But the historical records prove to be enigmatic rather than illuminating. These documents resemble plots and characters from Shakespeare's plays *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*. Finally Ryan reaches a startling conclusion – the hero Kilpatrick is also the traitor of this revolution. He was found out and condemned to die by the other conspirators. Since the ruined reputation of a hero would have jeopardized the revolt, the conspirators proposed to use the traitor's execution as an instrument to incite the revolution. Ryan proposes that they used Shakespeare's works as templates to plot the assassination. The whole of Dublin in this way became a stage, a vast, Shakespearean theatre and the revolution was a success.

The Narrative of the Story

This story perfectly exemplifies the fictive narrative in Borges's style – a simple, short text that implies infinite possibilities through fragments of discontinuous events and hints of missing information. The whole text has only 1384 words in the English translation. The narrative expression is extremely economical and works deliberately against the conventions of mystery fiction writing. Borges does not make any effort to design a coherent,

enigmatic storyline as he does not believe in temporal continuity and causal connections. On the contrary, he presents a mosaic of events and leaves many mysteries open ended. We do not know why Kilpatrick becomes a traitor, why he charges his oldest companion to discover the identity of the traitor, how Nolan finds out Kilpatrick is the traitor, why Kilpatrick accepts the execution without any resistance but begs not to let his execution harm the country he betrays. Most importantly, Borges only mentions that Nolan sets up the whole city of Dublin as the stage for the assassination of Kilpatrick by plagiarizing Shakespeare's plays, but there are no more details about how exactly such a complex scheme worked and which details disclose the truth to Ryan. Once the reader starts to wonder about all the possible reasons or to imagine the details untold in the story, this list of unsolved or unexplained mysteries will multiply. Borges writes this story as an initial draft of a plan for a massive book; it is the absence of information and the unanswered questions that push the reader's imagination to its possible limits.

As to the mirror-effect structure, there are five main dimensions of reflection within the text and my analysis of this structure is inspired by the five-layered mirror-effect structure that Paul de Man (1964) provides: 1) an actual historical event (in this fiction but not in real history) that Kilpatrick, the national hero of Ireland, betrays his confederates and is sentenced to death; 2) a literary predecessor - Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which echoes the historical event; 3) a further historical event – the assassination that is plotted according to Shakespeare's work in order to bring about the desired revolutionary effect; 4) reflecting on the intersection of the historical event and the literary work, the biographer Ryan derives a hypothesis about a

cyclical form of time and a repeating pattern under an eternal theme; 5)

Borges, the narrator of the story, frames the whole course of events in the form of a draft plan. The structure is thus like a spiral labyrinth made of mirrors.

The five dimensions are five individual events, which echo each other in different times and spaces. Yet, as discussed above, Borges believes that a mysterious substance sews the repeating patterns together and, in this text, this mysterious substance appears in recognisable form as Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. Indeed, other literary quotations and allusions complete the mirror-effect structure, such as W. B. Yeats's poem *The Tower*, Chesterton's mysteries, Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony, as well as Condorcet, Hegel, Spengler, Vico, and Hesiod. They might well suggest other clues, but to avoid falling into the vast set of intertextual games that Michael Evans warns us against I shall only focus on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the most significant literary allusion that governs the development of the story; and analyse how Kilpatrick's reflection on *Julius Caesar* presents Borges's philosophical Idealism. And this was also the angle that I took to develop my participatory drama design.

The Julius Caesar Reflection

Julius Caesar was written and performed in 1599, the late Elizabethan era, which, according to Jonathan Bate, was an era when the world was rapidly changing and England had the potential to become an empire, a second Rome in the modern world (Bate, 2010). Naturally such a new empire was in need of a mighty army and a conquering general to achieve its greatness.

The Earl of Essex, Bate suggests, was the young man who came on to the historical stage. “He offered himself to Queen Elizabeth as a modern Julius Caesar” (Bate, 2010). In March, 1599, Queen Elizabeth sent him to quell the rebellion in Ireland, where he had his greatest failure. However, having imagined himself as Julius Caesar, Essex launched a disastrous coup d’état in 1601, vainly believing he would get London people’s support and replace the Queen (Bate, 2010, p.4). One interlude in this event is that, on the eve before the rebellion, his conspirators commissioned Shakespeare’s theatre company to put on *Richard II*, Shakespeare’s play about a weak king being removed from the throne and replaced by a stronger man. The intention, as Jonathan Bate argues, must have been to use theatre to stir up people to support his march against the Queen (Bate, 1997, p.219). But unlike the rebellion in Borges’s story, this coup d’état failed and the Earl of Essex was sentenced to death.

Here we see many intersections between the ‘Caesar’ in Shakespeare’s time and the ‘Caesar’ in Borges’s story –both of them are involved in a war between England and Ireland; both of them try to create a public image as the ‘Julius Caesar’ of their eras, they are both leaders of rebellions, both are sentenced to death for betraying their own countries. And most importantly, on the eve of both rebellions, theatre (and it is Shakespearean theatre) plays a role intended to inflame people to support their ‘Caesar’. The Earl of Essex thus becomes the sixth layer in this story, a reflection of Kilpatrick in Elizabethan England.

According to Bate (2008), the performance of *Richard II* for the Earl of Essex was where the first recorded political appropriation of Shakespeare took place. It is very unlikely that our erudite author, Borges, knew nothing about this. This record about the eve of Essex's rebellion and Shakespearian theatre may well have inspired him to write this story.

Harold Bloom indicates that the centre of Borges's labyrinth is Shakespeare (2001); for Borges, Shakespeare is "the Maker or archetypal poet but also the archetypal man" (Bloom, 1994, p.473). *Julius Caesar* was written in "the fearful interim between the first motion against the insurrection and the realisation of the hideous dream of failure" (Bate, 2010, p.4). Using the materials of Roman history, Shakespeare makes the past speak to the present. The assassination of *Julius Caesar* is like a mirror reflecting real life issues in Elizabethan England, but as a great writer such as Shakespeare goes beyond local political circumstances, his play *Julius Caesar* raises the most fundamental questions about politics, which speak to any age and culture (Bate, 1997; 2010).

"To what degree should political power be concentrated in a single leader? Is the democratic process strong enough to withstand a potential tyrant or are there times when direct action on the street is the only possible course of action? Can we trust politicians to serve the people rather than their own interests?" (Bate, 2010, p. 6)

Human society in any historical stage could experience and reflect the same doubts, but Shakespeare never provides any simple answers, he only

addresses these questions in such a way that *Julius Caesar* always remains fresh to its readers and audiences.

Therefore it is understandable that Borges chose Shakespeare's play as core to the structure of this story. The universal and timeless nature of Shakespeare's art enables an enigma "to repeat or combine events of remote regions, of remote ages" (Borges, 2000, p.103), which makes it possible to embody Borges's thinking about the infinite and the cyclical nature of time. *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* can be read as Borges's re-creation of Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, which blurs time and space, but inherits the essence of the play and enriches it. In Borges's own words, "Shakespeare's work has been progressively enriched by the generations of its readers." The conspirator, Nolan, directs a new version of *Julius Caesar*, in which Kilpatrick is the main actor and Dublin is the stage; the biographer Ryan's investigation is his interpretation of Nolan's version of *Julius Caesar*. The whole story is a dynamic process and the text that Shakespeare offers guarantees the potential space for new adaptations and re-creations. Borges says that this is the feature of a book of genius, "the work of Shakespeare is virtually infinite, and the enigma of Shakespeare is only one part of that other enigma, artistic creation, which, in turn, is only a facet of another enigma: the universe." (2000, p. 473).

As I mentioned above, Borges writes the fragments of romance instead of the romance itself. In this story, if one wants to restore the 'romance' of Kilpatrick, the most important clue is *Julius Caesar*. But we can never have a coherent, completed storyline of Kilpatrick's life. Borges's re-creation of

Shakespeare is a story about the infinite; it only exists in the reader's mind – the anxious, confused, and unsatisfied mind. Borges has experienced the infinite when he reads Shakespeare's works; the feeling is like permanent curiosity that cannot be settled. There is no better way to approach the infinite than through continuous imagination. This text that he offers us is only a collection of signs recorded by his imagination, which aims to invoke an infinite amount of new imaginative responses to and beyond the text.

8.2 Planning the Scheme of Work

Whenever I mention Borges in a class or in a lecture... I become obsessed with the nightmare of him walking through the door or appearing at a window only to look at me with that both understanding and desperate smile which wise people reserve for very small children and for complete idiots. (Gumbrecht, 2006, p.181)

The textual analysis in the last section has provided a brief understanding of this text. Based on the textual analysis, I shall begin this section with a discussion of the potential difficulties in teaching practice, which particularly focuses on the possible problems facing my target group of students. The analysis of the drama scheme below will present my attempt to translate my analysis of the text into a participatory drama, so demonstrating the strengths and inevitable limitations of participatory drama as a pedagogy to deal with the challenges.

I have to claim at the beginning that my attempts to teach *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* this way will never do it justice. Hans Gumbrecht describes his feeling of teaching Borges as a "hopeless" "fear" (ibid). The

nightmare of this erudite scholar and experienced teacher also haunted me during the whole process of working on this text. Yet I am still fascinated and provoked by the imaginative writing, the original style as well as my fear of Borges, and I was passionate to share with students this particular Borges enthusiasm.

8.2.1 Challenges

According to the textual analysis, the teaching of this story has to achieve two main objectives: (1) to introduce Borges's idiosyncratic ideas on literature and philosophy, especially his understanding of time; (2) to study the textual effects that reflect the author's ideas, which is the author's 'poetic success' (De Man, 1964), the innovative narrative techniques that he applies in this text.

People who have come across the theme of time in Borges's story might well find it hard to understand. As Paul de Man (1964) puts it, the issue of time in Borges's story is different from our conventional understanding – continuous and in causal relation. However, this view of time particularly challenges historical materialism or Marx's theory of history, which Chinese students are familiar with. As I explained in Ch.2, Marx sees the history of human society as a linear development determined by the material conditions in each stage; however, Borges's view of time is in a spatial pattern, which is contrary to the view of history and social change proposed by historical materialism. Historical materialism claims that class struggle drives society to transmit from one mode to the next, whereas Borges sees all moments as autonomous but being held together by mysterious laws and hence

appearing to be repeated and echoing each other. To Chinese students, meeting Borges is like one who is accustomed to seeing events in linear form but suddenly has to imagine the world as a chaotic, multi-dimensional space, and any deeply rooted Marxist view of history will render an understanding of Borges's vision of time extremely difficult.

Regarding the fictive narrative, Borges as a "modern master" (De Man, 1964) has subverted the conventional understanding of fiction writing. He breaks down the boundary between the narratives of fiction and those of literary criticism. His fictional writing dissolves plot and characterization and the strong metaphysical and essay-like style pushes his narratives beyond our conventional understanding of short story writing. Hence, the strategies that we use to study traditional fiction become ineffective here. In particular, the key concerns of reflectionist theory that Chinese literary education has been using, such as social-historical background, representativeness, characterization, the description of details, would naturally fail to deal with such fictional, highly concise plot and shadow-like characters. Zhong Fenghua, a literacy teacher in Hangzhou High School, one of the leading senior high schools in Southeast China, mentions in a newspaper interview that young people "prefer fictions that tell vivid stories" and in the chapter on modernist literature (which includes Borges's work) he claims that that it does not suit their reading expectations, hence most of them complain that the stories are "too obscure"; consequently the teacher's guiding role becomes far more important, and the task, according to this experienced teacher, is "extremely demanding" (Tu, 2012, p.c5).

Moreover, my attempt to apply reception theory in my teaching also faces challenges. Firstly, the discussion above shows that the *horizon of expectation* that my target students hold is to some extent against the nature and aesthetic value of Borges's text. Therefore the *aesthetic distance* between the text and the reader seems to be a huge gap. Secondly, reception theory suggests reading experience as an interaction between the text and the reader. Gumbrecht indicates that Borges's fiction reads as if the author is willing to engage in a conversation with his reader, but one that is more like a "private conversation among scholars" (2006, p.181). Borges, as Bloom puts it, enchants the reader with "impersonal forces" rather than life experience, the reader needing a profound knowledge of Borges's precursors in western canonical tradition to understand the subtlety of the intertextual games he plays. As to *Theme of the traitor and the hero*, certain knowledge of *Julius Caesar* and Shakespeare definitely helps the reader to make sense of the mirror-effect structure and Borges's philosophical thoughts that have been woven into the text. But educators should be aware that most common readers, especially young people, do not have such a scholarly knowledge system.

However, from another perspective, the nature of Borges's work does echo reception theory to some extent. In his essay on Shakespeare, Borges expresses his view of reading as a dynamic process, and claims that "a work of genius" can be "enriched by the generations" and be read in different ways, that is how it turns into "the infinite" (2000, p.473). The intertextuality and literary allusions in his work can be viewed as his innovative reading of canonical literature. My drama scheme has adapted/translated the original

text of *Theme of the traitor and the hero*, as one possibility of reading this work of genius in a different generation. Indeed, the drama scheme presents the text in another narrative form and certain details have been changed and some have been added, but this new version attempts to echo a very Borgesian style for it is trying to demonstrate that a work of genius has the potential to open infinite recreations.

8.2.2 Scheme Design

I designed a series of participatory drama exercises to 1) establish a literary community, in which students could become able to interact intimately with the text as well as readily with each other; 2) to introduce the basic understanding that I discussed in the textual analysis.

Context

First of all, in my drama scheme, I changed the setting from 1820s Ireland to 1920s China. As the reflectionist theory has the tendency to stress about the importance of social historical background in literary understanding, and students generally accept this idea, the setting of the nineteenth century revolutionary Ireland would certainly have been alien to most of them, even though the historical event (the rebellion caused by Kilpatrick's death) in the text is completely fictional. Moreover, to young people who like vivid stories, such a setting makes it hard to imagine the characters and scenarios, although characterization and scenes are not Borges's concern. The change of context/setting is a compromise for making the text more familiar to students. But fortunately, it need not harm the fidelity, because 1) Borges's playing down the plot and characters frees the change of setting from the

social-historical constrains; in fact he writes in the original text that the story could take place in any oppressed country. In Bertolucci's film adaptation *The Spider's Stratagem* (1970) this story is set in Italy and harks back to the Fascism of the 1930s. 2) Borges's own argument on the dynamic reading of genius shows that he is open to different ways of reading from generation to generation, since he reckons a book of genius can be "tuned infinitely" (1999, p.473). My adapted version shows some other possible images for this story, which is part of the infinite that Borges hides in this work of genius.

The choice of the era was made after much consideration. Due to the significance of Shakespeare in this text, I could not set this story in ancient China, for western culture, especially, only started to come into China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, I felt certain that the problem with the revolutionary moments in these 100 years is that they are too recent and present too many ideological challenges; many Chinese people would not be able to distance themselves from them and their understanding of real history would consequently affect their understanding of this fictional story. For example, if I had set this story during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), I could have been accused of defaming the great victory of the Anti-Fascist War. If I had set it in the Chinese Civil War from 1946 to 1950, some would have assumed it was an insinuation aimed at the establishment of the People's Republic China and the founding fathers of the country.

Thus I chose early 1920s China since it is relatively a more remote period, and the communist party of China had not yet been founded. More

importantly, this historical period echoes 19th century Ireland as the 1920s is a revolutionary time in Chinese history. Western thoughts about democracy and modern society came to China after the First World War. It is also an oppressed time - China's relations with western countries were under diplomatic tension for various reasons after the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 (Fairbank & Feuerwerker, 1978). Moreover, it is a fascinating time, when many famous and influential politicians, writers, artists, and celebrities came on to the stage, whose names are still well-known in China nowadays. The name Kilpatrick I changed to Yeh Lin-chih (叶麟趾), which is inspired by *The Classic of Poetry*, the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry²⁷.

As I discussed in the textual analysis, the narrative of the text appears as critical allegory, and the story is presented as “romance fragments” (Bloom, 1994, p.471) with abstract characters and events. Hence the narrative of drama has to reproduce the same feature. The drama scheme consists of two main parts; both are aimed to present the Borgesian style in the narrative form of participatory drama. I named the two parts as ‘newspaper’ and ‘film-making’.

The Newspaper Exercise

The drama scheme begins with an exercise (See Appendix B), in which the teacher tells students that in the China of the 2020s, a famous writer has just finished a biographical novel about her great grandfather, an assassinated

²⁷ 麟之趾 is a poem in *the Classic of Poetry*, which praises a noble prince in ancient China, the poet comparing the prince to a beautiful legendary animal, the son of Celestial Dragon. However the surname Yeh 叶, makes this poetic image rather ironic, because ‘Lord Yeh Loves Dragons’ (叶公好龙) is one of the mostly used idioms in the Chinese language. Lord Yeh was very fond of dragons, but when a dragon visited him, he was frightened and ran away. This idiom satirizes people who show great enthusiasm or support to something, but are averse to it in actual practice.

general who died in the 1920s. Then the teacher shows some sections of feature stories taken from three different Chinese newspapers and a magazine – *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the communist party of China; *Southern Weekly*, the most influential liberal newspaper in China; and *Panorama*, a popular magazine of book reviews, art and unofficial history. In the fictional context, all the features work as marketing for this new biographical novel. This exercise has three functions: firstly, to introduce the idea of 'the fictional' to students who might have a deeply rooted literary horizon of realism – 2020s China clearly suggests that the story is made up; secondly, the newspapers and the magazine actually exist in China, and the report and reviews were written in imitation of their actual styles. Hence the exercise is intended to blur the boundary between fiction and reality, which echoes the original text - making up a fictional rebellion in a revolutionary Ireland in the nineteenth century that was nonetheless revolutionary during this era. Thirdly, the information about the hero/traitor presented here has a similar effect to that which Borges creates in the original text - abstract, fragmentary, but multi-dimensional, which makes this character mysterious and contradictory, meanwhile stimulating students to imagine the possible reasons and other missing details.

This last idea was inspired by a British TV comedy *Yes, Prime Minister* (2005). In one episode of this political comedy the Prime Minister, Jim Hacker, makes a satirical statement on the British press.

Hacker: Don't tell me about the press, I know exactly who reads the papers: the *Daily Mirror* is read by people who think they run the

country; the *Guardian* is read by people who think they ought to run the country; the *Times* is read by people who actually do run the country; the *Daily Mail* is read by the wives of the people who run the country; the *Financial Times* is read by people who own the country; the *Morning Star* is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country; and the *Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think it is.

Yes, *Prime Minister* expresses a cynical but shrewd opinion that the mass media tend to choose a particular attitude to interpret an event to “pander to their readers' prejudices” (ibid). In this exercise, I applied this view to a corresponding system in the Chinese context. The image of the hero/traitor has been described from a variety of viewpoints – main-stream authority (people who run or own the country), liberal intellectuals (people who think they ought to run the country or think the country ought to be run by another country), and nostalgic aesthetes (people who do not care who runs the country or would like to go back to an ideal of what the country was like in the last century). The information from the feature stories suggests a young, heroic, patriotic, charismatic, mysterious man but only shows the tip of the iceberg. Some of the information given echoes with other pieces, whereas some seems contradictory. Students are being asked to doubt and to wonder – What really happened? Is he a real hero or is it just commercial exploitation for the biographical novel? Moreover, according to their understanding of the three papers and magazine, my intention was for students to look at the information from a critical perspective.

If the first exercise in the ‘newspaper part’ of the drama aims to re-create a narrative of ‘fragments of romance’ that mirrors the original text and is intended to open up the story, the second exercise has another important function– using the mass media to demonstrate the role of Shakespeare’s theatre in this story.

In an interview on the play *The Man from Stratford* (2010), Jonathan Bate as the playwright expressed a point that Shakespearian theatre was the first mass media in the Elizabethan era. He argues that in an era without newspapers, television reports, and news channels, theatre was the place where the great controversies of the age were aired in public.

Shakespearean theatre presented stories that reflected contemporary controversies of religion and politics to audiences that included the whole community from the royalty, the aristocrats to the rising middle classes and the lower classes. Therefore I designed another ‘newspaper exercise’: near the end of the drama scheme after students know the whole storyline, they are divided into three groups, and work as journalists and editors in 1920s China to report the assassination for three different groups of audiences, which are the main-stream authority, the liberal classes, and the tabloid readers. This newspaper exercise was to provide a similar role to that of Shakespearean theatre – using mass media to present a live public issue in front of the whole community.

In addition, in Shakespeare’s time, the Earl of Essex appointed Shakespeare’s company to stage a performance of *Richard II* because he wanted to use the only mass media of the time for propaganda purposes

(Bate, 2008). In Borges' story, Nolan sets up the whole city of Dublin as a Shakespearian theatre, the whole event of Kilpatrick's death also acting as a mass form of propaganda. I thought it would be interesting to imagine how the typical mass media of the period – the newspaper – would respond to the assassination. We know that in the original text, Kilpatrick is killed in a theatre, a public place but with only a limited amount of witnesses. How would the news be spread around the whole country in a way to light up the revolution? Borges has not provided the details. But in the context of 1920s China, it would be the newspapers that would do this, affecting public opinion and popular will.

Finally, the two newspaper exercises also try to create a Borgesian spiral pattern of a sceptical, ironical atmosphere, since students will find out that the hero is the traitor in the end. But in the fictional world, it remains as a secret forever. So when the students know the truth and look back, they will realise that the so-called hero's life is merely an ironic lie that has been repeated in various versions by the press, by the biographer, by the film makers (which I will discuss in the next section) and by themselves again and again. It turns into, in Borges' words, "a secret form of time, a pattern of repeated lines", as he writes at the end of the original text.

Filmmaking

After the first 'newspaper exercise', students are introduced to the exercise of filmmaking. The teacher informs students that a producer has bought the film rights to this biographical novel, found a famous director and is organising a strong team to make a film about the heroic life of Yeh Lin-

chih/Kilpatrick. A series of exercises are now conducted. The first is 'making a list', in which students are divided into two groups, one as the team of costume and make up designers and the other in charge of film properties and set design. Each team has to list ten items to create the look of the main character or the character's private space for the film shooting. The second exercise I called 'chorus', in which students work in groups as supporting actors, each group presenting a scene of people in 1920s Beijing talking about the hero before he returns in military triumph. The third exercise is 'the last 24 hours in the hero's life', in which students in groups have to work out how the film presents the heroic death.

First of all, I will explain why I applied the process of film-making in these drama exercises. In all these exercises, students work as backstage crew, actors in film-shooting and the characters in the film that they are making. Hence the threefold narrative of this participatory drama involves the elements of fiction and non-fiction, blurring the boundary between make believe and belief.

Just as Borges writes fiction in the forms of non-fiction, as literary criticism or historical research, within the context of participatory drama, I tried here to emulate this aspect of his story telling style. The hero is considered in the drama as a 'real' historical figure and students work as a 'real' film crew. The three drama exercises create a cinematic frame that pretends to be non-fictional. But in the process of their 'film-making', no matter whether it is costume design or acting out the key scenes in their 'film', they are inscribing the hero's life within an art project of make believe, which is fictional. And of

course, the overall narrative of the 'film-making' drama is fictional - the film crew and the biopic story are not real - therefore the three exercises of 'filmmaking' can be viewed as making a fiction within a fictional context, with the process of making presented as non-fictional. In this way I was trying to imitate Borges's innovative narrative style – setting a fictional story (Kilpatrick's death and the rebellion) within a real historical context (1824 Ireland), using a non-fiction narrative form (literary review) to frame a fiction (Kilpatrick's story).

This idea of filmmaking was inspired by a Hong Kong film *Centre Stage* (1992), which is about the life of an iconic silent film star, Ruan Lingyu, in Shanghai in the 1930s. The structure of the film mixes three different cinematic forms (Hjort, 2006, p.37) - documentary film, dramatic film and silent film. The narrative has three layers: 1) a film crew making a film on Ruan Lingyu, which is shown in the form of documentary film; 2) movie clips of the dramatic film about Ruan Lingyu made by the film's shooting team; 3) the film crew re-making famous scenes from Ruan Lingyu's acting career in the form of a black and white silent film.

The three-layer structure of *Centre Stage* and the five layered, mirror-effect structure of Borges's story share some similarities. In *Centre Stage*, the film crew is trying to present the life of an actress, who in her own life has acted out the stories of many fictional characters. In *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, a writer is trying to present the life of his great-grandfather, a hero who used his own life and death to act out a play about another hero. Both of them present interplays between fictional and non-fictional narratives, and

frame a repeated mirror-effect structure. I adapted the structure of *Centre Stage* in my drama scheme because it provided a possible example of dramatising the mirror-effect structure.

In the first 'filmmaking' exercise, students work in groups as costume and make up designers or as property masters and set designers. Like the film crew in *Centre Stage*, they are given limited historical resources (the information provided in the 'newspaper' exercise) to study the character. As I discussed in the textual analysis, Borges writes 'fragments of romance' to open the reader's imagination to the infinite possibilities of the 'romance'. In the original text, Borges describes Kilpatrick as "the young, the heroic, the beautiful, the assassinated Fergus Kilpatrick", "a secret and glorious captain", which is like a brief comment on a character in a historical study or literary review. When Kilpatrick was changed into Yeh Lin-Chih, I added more information according to the historical setting. But due to the form of the newspaper feature, the description about the character and his life was still in the narrative form of non-fiction, and since they are only small parts of different feature stories, the information was presented in fragments.

Therefore, students had to use their imaginations to enrich the character and his life. And in this exercise, they had to list ten items of clothing/ accessories/ room décor to complete the image of the character and his life scene.

David Lodge claims that the list is one of the nonfiction discourses that can be adapted into fictional prose and be reproduced in "its own

characteristically vertical form, contrasting with the surrounding discourse”

(1992, p.62). He reviews a list in *Tender is the Night* by Scott Fitzgerald:

“She bought coloured beads, folding beach cushions, artificial flowers, honey, a guest bed, bags, scarves, love birds, miniatures for a doll’s house and three yards of some new cloth the colour of prawns. She bought a dozen bathing suits, a rubber alligator, a travelling chess set of gold and ivory, big linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two chamois leather jackets of kingfisher blue and burning bush from Hermes” (Cited in Lodge, 1992, p.61)

This is part of Nicole’s shopping list. Unlike second rate writers, who may list a series of luxury brands to present a wealthy character, Lodge points out that only by mentioning one brand - Hermes - and mixing it with multifarious objects in no logical order or hierarchy of price, Fitzgerald creates the impression of Nicole’s prodigal nature, her non-utilitarian principle of shopping, and her personality – generous, impulsive, loving fun and sensual pleasure.

In this exercise of the ‘list’, students are not simply visualising the image of the character and his life; as with Nicole’s shopping list, each item has to signify certain understandings or interpretations of the character and the possibilities of his life story. In the original story, Borges pays hardly any attention to the character’s look, clothing or scenes from his life; Borges breaks the conventions of characterization in traditional fiction writing and turns his characters into shadows, but in this way he provides the reader with

infinite space to imagine the story. This exercise of listing attempts to exploit this gap by channelling the participants' imaginations.

8.3 Analysis of the Teaching Practice

This section provides the analysis of the data collected during the teaching practice. In the teaching, I mainly focused on two key topics: 1) the theme of time in Borges's stories; 2) the narrative structure of Borges' stories. The key questions guiding the analysis in this section are:

- What are the effects of the drama on facilitating the students to engage in Borges' original fictive narrative?
- What are the effects of the attempted dramatic translation of the Borgesian narrative in introducing the theme of the repeating, spiral model of time in Borges' story?
- To what extent has the drama challenged the students' 'horizons of expectation' on short story writing and enriched their understanding of literary fiction?

Because of the nature of drama, it is impossible to address those issues in a neat order. Moreover, the drama exercises also raised a number of relevant theoretical concerns. Therefore, the analysis is not structured according to the order of the key questions listed above, but operates within a more flexible framework leading off from the major drama exercises. However, my analysis of the students' responses will be guided by the above questions.

Considering the difficulties of the original text itself, as well as the challenges of the teaching objectives, the actual teaching practice went through several improvements and only achieved relatively acceptable results with Groups 4

and 5 in the field work. Therefore, most of the data analysed in this section are mainly drawn from the last two groups.

Moreover, apart from analysing issues that emerge from the questions above, this section will also focus on unanticipated issues that emerged from the data, in order to fully explore what Stake refers to as the *emic* and *etic* issues in case study research (1995).

8.3.1. The Interplay between Fiction and Non-fiction

The first newspaper exercise (See Appendix B), addressed a number of key issues in the guiding questions, including 1) the dramatic translation of the Borges's fictive narrative, including the mirror-effect structure, the use of non-fiction discourse, and the fragmentary storytelling; 2) the students' perceptions of the repeating, spiral model of time embodied in this narrative; 3) the interaction between the 'interpretive community' and 'horizons of expectation' of the student participants and Borges' original creation.

I used the form of newspaper features in order to apply a non-fiction discourse, a feature that characterises the original text. In the original text, Borges tells the story through the form of a first person narrative and in that of a writer's journal, a factual discourse framed as a fiction. This drama exercise attempted to imitate such a multi-layered interplay between fiction and non-fiction: the fiction (the story) was presented in the discourse of non-fiction; the non-fiction writing (the three news features) was in fact fictional; within this fictional context, the non-fictional discourse aimed to depict a so-called historical fact (the hero's life), which was itself a fiction (in fact he is a

traitor) and adapted from Shakespearean theatre (which is also fictional). The following analysis will examine the effect of all these teaching designs.

With all the five groups, none of the students expressed any interest in the version of the character depicted in the feature published in the first newspaper (the mouthpiece of the communist party). Typical remarks were that this was a 'very political viewpoint' (Sally and Nick in Group 3, Jessica in Group 4, Toby in Group 5), that it presented 'only a positive perspective'; that such 'a guy with a halo' (Simba in Group 4) was 'rather flat', and 'boring' (Sally and Freya in Group 3; Cora, Jessica, and Patrick in Group 4; Helen, Liz and Toby in Group 5). Opinions towards this report were generally cynical.

Group 5

Helen: Everyone could be a 'revolutionary pioneer' if the government decides they should be.

Group 4

Jessica: You can simply replace the guy's name with any other similar figures. One thousand people but only one face, that's typical of the *People's Daily's* reporting style.

The students found the liberal newspaper report more interesting as it was 'much less political' and provided 'a multi-angled view' (Toby in Group 5).

The character was seen as 'more complex, with ambiguous and even negative aspects' (Cora in Group 4) and because he was controversial, they found him 'a fascinating person' (Patrick in Group 4).

Group 3

Sally: I'm a *Southern Weekend* reader myself. Their reports are very daring, very critical, and always investigate the news event in depth. In this feature, it brings you a perspective different from the mainstream view and provides you with all the complexities. This kind of report makes you think.

Students' responses here are influenced by their cultural experiences of these particular newspapers, whether cynical or positive, which echoes Stanley Fish's concept of the reader's interpretive community that I mentioned in Ch. 2 (More analysis and discussion on this issue follows in Ch. 9). The interplay between fictional and non-fictional discourses thus created a poetic illusion, which blurred the boundary between their real life experiences and their apprehension of this fictional story. Although well aware of its fictional nature (2020s time setting, and I emphasized this at the beginning for them), they still commented on the features as if they were real news reports, thus willingly contracting into the game of drama (More analysis on crossing boundaries between the real and the fictional is in Ch. 9).

The three features were presented in small sections, firstly to create dramatic suspense but more importantly to reproduce the style of 'romance fragments'. As I discussed in the textual analysis, Borges claims himself that his style 'deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities' (cited in De Man, 1964, p.60), so Bloom notes that instead of writing romances, Borges writes 'romance fragments' to open the reader's imagination of the infinite

possibilities' (1994, p. 471). The very brief and fragmental descriptions certainly served to stimulate the students' curiosity, to open up their imaginations to explore possibilities. I had set this story in 1920s China so as to make the context more familiar to students, and many picked up on certain fragmental details from the features as clues, and began to use their own historical knowledge to figure out the origin of this character in order to imagine what had happened to him.

In Groups 3 and 4, I was asked if he was based on any real historical figures from Chinese history. They told me that they would 'definitely Google him later!' (Simba and Patrick in Group 4 said this in class), and at the same time, provided possible candidates in their mind, such as Chang Hsueh-liang²⁸, Chiang Kai-shek²⁹ or Wang Ching-wei³⁰. All three figures are well-known politicians from twentieth century Chinese history. Students gave reasons for their guesses – they were all powerful politicians who had served in the military, were handsome and charismatic, involved in assassinations, and whose lives remain intriguing and, in some ways, mysterious. In Group 4, one student immediately suggested that this fictional character resembled Wang Ching-wei to such an extent that he was mistrustful of the positive comments written about him.

²⁸Chang Hsueh-liang was the effective warlord of northeast China after the assassination of his father by the Japanese on 4 June 1928. He had also been dubbed as the 'Young Marshal'. In the 1936 Xi'an Incident, he arrested Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of China's ruling party, and forced him to enter a united front with the Chinese Communist Party against Japan.

²⁹Chiang Kai-shek was a Chinese political and military leader of the Republic of China from 1928 to 1975. Chiang led the Northern Expedition that unified China and became the nominal leader of the country.

³⁰Wang Ching-wei was a Chinese politician, who was initially a member of the left wing of the Kuomintang (KMT), but later in his political career, his orientation veered sharply to the right especially after he joined the alliance with the Axis Powers during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Group 4

Patrick: The second newspaper says he is controversial, but I feel that means he is not stable, not loyal enough, just like Wang Ching-wei. Wang Ching-wei used to be a passionate patriot, the most beautiful politician when he was young. He tried to assassinate the prince regent of the late Qing Dynasty, but even at that time, as a revolutionary, he still said to his friend that 'I am not a loyal, stable person who can keep fighting for one political ideal all the way through, so I'd like to burn myself like a firework in a magnificent moment in history and light up the whole nation'. Then years later, in the Second Sino-Japanese War, he became the greatest traitor of China, working completely against his former revolutionary ideals.

Patrick's description of Wang does echo Kilpatrick in many ways – a young, beautiful, patriotic man who becomes the traitor of his own nation. Wang's words 'I'd like to burn myself like a firework in a magnificent moment in history and light up the whole nation' exactly reflects the intended effect of Kilpatrick's assassination in the original story. Patrick then went on to express an opinion that this character's life could be much darker than the reports suggested – 'the glorious moments in his life may have an unexpected purpose, and he may well have the potential to be a criminal genius or a charismatic, elegant villain' – an interpretation also much closer to the story's heart.

Those students' responses show that, firstly, the fragmental information established suspense, which roused their curiosity. Secondly, they used their

knowledge base (interpretive communities) to investigate the story; for, even though I informed them that the character was completely fictional, they still assumed that the story was drawn from specific historical sources, having its origin in real history, which demonstrates the over-riding tendency for them to understand literature in realistic or socio-historical terms.

Thirdly, Borges's stories usually sew up the gap between the fictional world and real history, a feature this drama exercise tried to imitate. The common reader might possibly become confused by this. Wu Xiaodong has mentioned in a lecture on *The Garden of Forking Paths* that he gave in Peking University that some "innocent readers" would really believe that the fiction narrated here tells the real reason why the British Army's military attack was postponed in World War I. But Wu calls those innocent people "the real ideal readers", for they enjoy engaging in the artistic illusion and take the literary text seriously, whereas the literature department produces "so-called rational readers who are sophisticated, shrewd but extremely cynical and completely lack belief" (2003, p.206). Wu's opinion is a criticism of higher education, but his notion of 'the ideal reader' is very like how Dr Samuel Johnson and Virginia Woolf define 'the common reader'. In Dr Johnson's words, they are "uncorrupted by literary prejudices", (cited in Woolf, 1984, p. 11). Although most of the students are influenced by socio-realism, and some value literary realism over other literary works, which can be viewed as a literary prejudice, they still tend to experience literature instinctively, with certain respect and enthusiasm. Facing this situation, I think that on the one hand, the common reader's enthusiasm deserves to be valued, on the other hand, it demonstrates that some basic literary

knowledge, especially about poetics, needs to be introduced to the common reader; for, as Bate suggests, “an understanding of the tools of the reader’s trade and a journey by which a literary work comes into being should increase rather than diminish the pleasure we take from the finished product” (2010, p.24).

Finally, the fragmental information provided the students with suggestions that activated their historical knowledge, the historical figures becoming the mirror images of this fictional character in real history. This reflects a key idea in the original story – that history copies literature. In addition, in the students’ perceptions, these historical figures worked in a manner similar to the intensive, intertextual allusions we find in Borges’s stories. Borges uses scholarly allusions to build his labyrinthine narratives, relating his stories to an immense amount of books, and historical events. These students used their knowledge of real history to imagine how the story might develop. Patrick even worked out a story line which corresponded closely to the original, so glimpsing the complexity embedded in this highly condensed text.

8.3.2 The Shakespeare Reflection

In the two newspaper exercises, the initial design was to use the form of participatory drama to present certain features of mass media in order to re-create the mirror-effect of the *Julius Caesar* reflection in the original story (Please see the design of the drama scheme for more details in the appendices). The following analysis will examine the effect of this design.

Rhetoric

With Group 5, I asked the students to list the information they extracted from the three features in three categories: 'what I believe', 'what I don't believe', and 'what I'm not sure about'. I found that all the facts such as 'he was a handsome general', 'he was assassinated', 'he died young', were placed into the category of 'what I believe'; the mystery of his death and all the comments that the features made, especially who killed him and whether he was a hero or not, were placed in the category 'what I'm not sure about'; whereas 'what I don't believe' was initially left blank. But when I specifically asked the students to fill this category, two of them immediately answered 'I don't believe the *People's Daily*', which is the communist party's official newspaper. However, when I checked with them the information provided by this paper one by one, such as 'is he a national hero' and 'is he a pioneer of Chinese revolution', the students, including these two, all said that they were not sure. I asked them why they had immediately chosen not to believe this paper's report.

Group 5

Toby: We are not sure whether it is true or not. But the communist party's newspaper interprets everything to serve the party's political ends.

Although I did not work with Group 4 on this exercise, a student raised the issue even more thoroughly than in Group 5.

Group 4

Patrick: The target reader determines how the paper depicts this character. A historical figure's life must present so many things to write about, but the paper would only 'feed' the readers with the information they wish them to hear. And in turn, the press can also use words to manipulate public opinion by saying things that people like, or saying things in the way people like, and most of the time there are political interests behind this. Experienced journalists are able to turn black into white without letting you notice it. You believe you have read something objective and critical, but actually your thoughts have already been framed by their skillful *rhetoric*!

Their response, especially Patrick's, can be analyzed within the framework of Baudrillard's theories in *The Consumer Society* (1998) and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981), which explain the consumption function of news as well as its role in social integration and control from a postmodern perspective. However, this is not what I wish to concentrate on here as it is not central to my research concerns.

These students chose not to believe *the People's Daily*, not because they were certain about the falsity of the information, but because they did not like the paper's political stance and mistrusted their journalistic discourse.

Patrick's answer reveals a key word 'rhetoric' –mass media can use rhetorical skills to report events either to service public opinion or to manipulate it.

In Act III, scene II of *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony's speech is an iconic example of rhetoric, which ultimately depicts Caesar in a magnificent light and completely turns the crowd against the conspirators. In Borges's story, Nolan makes use of the assassination of Kilpatrick (another Caesar) to prepare for the rebellion. The act itself is a rhetorical device taken from Shakespeare's dramatic structure, itself a form of rhetoric. Both Antony's speech and Nolan's plan work because the Shakespearean rhetoric both pleases and manipulates their target audiences.

A reflection of *Julius Caesar*, especially Mark Antony's rhetoric, was planted elsewhere in the drama, in the filmmaking exercise. As part of this I asked three students to present a scene in a teahouse, designed to imitate the opening scene in Shakespeare's play, with the common people talking about the return of the hero. In this scene, Helen was in role as a new capitalist, Tara played a royalist and Daniel was the waiter attempting to please both of them.

Group 5

Helen: General Yeh is such a hero. He will save us from the war and bring peace to our lives.

Daniel: Oh he must be a good man then.

Tara: You innocent fools. If he wants peace, why fight one war after another?

Daniel: Yes, yes. I can't buy vegetables during the war.

Helen: You don't understand politics. I'm not talking to you. Anyway he is an honourable, generous man.

Daniel: Yes, complex, (facing Tara) maybe he fights for us?

Tara: Are you dreaming, you sillies? When have I ever seen YOUR general sharing HIS money with US? Those warlords all fight for THEIR own interests, who cares about US? If he keeps fighting like this, you (pointed to Daniel), your teahouse will definitely be closed, it is just a matter of time.

Daniel (to Helen): No, no. I want to keep my job. I don't like this man!

In Mark Antony's speech, he deals Brutus a final blow by telling the crowd of Caesar's will – to give every Roman citizen a share of his money and land. This most practical interest finally turns the crowd completely against the conspirators. This teahouse scene spontaneously improvised a similar strategy of persuasion. The waiter played by Daniel, like the crowd, moves between two opinions. The capitalist played by Helen depicted the hero as morally good ("For Brutus is an honourable man"), Daniel initially followed this idea. However, when the royalist pointed out the potential consequences of war the waiter was won over by financial considerations: maybe he could give up vegetables for the honourable man, but to lose his business was asking too much.

Multi-layered Pretending

From the teaching experience I had gained previously, I improved the 'newspaper exercise' with Group 5. Near the end of the workshop, before I

disclosed the truth that the hero was actually the traitor, the students were asked to report the assassination as if they were journalists in 1920s China. They were divided into three different groups, each taking a particular newspaper's standpoint to depict this event. Like the 'newspaper exercise' at the beginning, the three papers were the main-stream official newspaper, a liberal newspaper, and a popular tabloid.

Three students presented the tabloid paper's report, two of them representing the news photo, the other reading the report as follows:

Title: Beautiful God of War killed in Theatre

Photo: a young general dying in the arms of a lady

At eight o'clock yesterday, before the rainstorm came, a bullet shattered the peace of the night. General Yeh Lin-chih was assassinated in Chi-hsiang Theatre. The brightest star of our era has thus fallen from the sky.

This only reported the event itself without providing any reasons or comments. They put their effort into evoking atmosphere and using melodramatic phrases to create a tragic moment. The students were fully aware of those exaggerations and later laughed as they spoke about it.

Helen: I strongly felt I was trying to capture my potential readers' attention. Feminists wouldn't like it but the fact is that most of the readers for 'my paper' would be female in that era. And they would definitely be interested in a handsome general, a romantic love story,

and a tragic death. So that is what I presented to them, including the photo – the hero dying in the arms of a beautiful young woman.

As a journalist, Helen saw her task as chiefly suiting the interests of her readers.

(**Teacher:** This report has some vivid details, which seems as if the journalist had been there in person.)

Helen: Oh don't take it too seriously. It has to be reworked. All romantic stories have to go through such a process of being reworked artistically.

In the drama context, those students knew that they were pretending to be journalists in the 1920s. And Helen said 'don't take it too seriously', which suggests in her fictional role, she was also pretending to present a real romantic story. However, this double-layered pretence reveals a fact that history and real events may well apply certain artistic skills in order to capture the audience, which echoes the original text – a heroic moment being presented by drawing self-consciously from literary sources in order to cater for a specific audience.

The levels of pretending in this group also mirror a significant feature of the multiple layers of Shakespearean theatre. This has been highlighted by Jonathan Bate through his analysis of Act IV of *King Lear*. "Theatre is made by pretending", Bate reminds us and Shakespeare is very good at deploying "highly complicated, many-layered stagecraft" – in the cliff scene, Edgar, Gloucester and Lear all pretend on the stage and in the story. And Shakespeare "reflects self-consciously upon the nature of theatre". Bate

argues that such pretending puts the audience in multiple time and space – “the theatre, the ancient British world within the play, the monarchical world in which Shakespeare wrote, and our own sense of ‘how this world goes’ ” (2010, pp.111-2). By using fictive narrative, Borges creates a similar, multi-layered effect with *Julius Caesar* in the story of Kilpatrick. In this exercise, this group presented a less complex but similar effect. Their drama also works in several ‘spaces’ at once – the drama class, the story’s setting in 1920s Beijing, the Beijing where their reworked romance takes place, and the students’ own understanding of their drama work.

The pretence in the report by the ‘official newspaper’ was presented as entirely manipulative.

Title: General Yeh Lin-chi has been assassinated by political radicals

Photo: General Yeh in military uniform

Yesterday evening, General Yeh Lin-chih was assassinated in Chihsiang Theatre. It has been proven that this assassination was planned by a group of political radicals. Although certain details still need further investigation, the Investigating Commission believes that this assassination aimed to create social unrest and rioting. We are calling on people to come forward and provide more information and evidence.

Tara: Yes, we killed him, but we are not going to admit it. We shall say, look at the chaos, who gets all the benefits? Everyone can see

it is the opposition, the so-called revolutionaries. We just pour dirty water on their heads; say it is their conspiracy.

This group clearly articulated how mass media, especially the mouthpieces of political authority, are used to manipulate public opinion for political ends. As with the tabloid group, they were pretending but in a slightly more complex and paradoxical way. These pretend journalists were pretending that their political group had not killed the hero but, ironically, their pretence was actually the truth in this fiction.

The Mobs

I asked the students where they had gotten their idea from.

Group 5

Tara: It is a political game, a power game. And I also got a bit of help from the detective stories I read.

Liz: This is so common, for god's sake. Governments do horrible things to people, and then wash themselves as clean as a virgin. Someone else gets the blame.

Toby: There is always a scapegoat after a political scandal, especially an assassination. And the authorities would let the scapegoat represent a particular group that they wanted to get rid of, then manipulate public opinion to hatred in order to damage them. And the mobs who are manipulated this way would only think they were doing justice.

The understanding of politics and power struggles articulated by these students and stimulated by the exercise does, in fact, mirror the theme of *Julius Caesar* as adapted and reflected in Borges's story, especially the reference to mobs acting violently in the name of justice. Interestingly, too, Tara's reference to detective stories echoes that of Borges, who claimed that this story was influenced by the works of Chesterton. In the process, the complex issues that the original text raises were also raised in the drama exercise - the writing of unreliable history, the manipulation of public opinion, and the fictional/ artificial elements in real event reporting. Although the students were as yet unaware of it, they had already begun to engage in a discussion of complex themes raised by the author.

8.3.3 From Telling to Showing

I mentioned in Ch.4 Ana María Barrenechea's famous comment on Borges' style, that its aim was to "destroy reality and convert man into a shadow" (cited in Bloom, 2000, pp.470-1). The core of Borges's aesthetics is unreality; instead of dealing with human existence, he is more interested in building up an imaginary labyrinth based upon his literary predecessors. Therefore the content of his stories tends to be scholarly, the fictional discourse being enriched by elements of history, philosophy, linguistics, theology and literary criticism. If this discourse is one of 'telling', that of drama, by contrast, is mainly one of 'showing'. In the pilot study, as described in the earlier chapter, I failed to adapt the discourse from telling to showing and consequently it did not work, so I later changed it to the filmmaking exercise, which was far more successful.

I admit that such a translation would risk the fidelity to the original text. It is not completely impossible to use drama to re-create Borges's style – Beckett has used the form of drama to present shadow-like characters, particularly in his later works such as *Play* and *Rockaby*, for example, and he, too, has shown a similar preoccupation with time, notably in *Waiting for Godot*. However, considering the research objective, which is to make modernist literature accessible to the common reader, I am not positive that attempting to apply the expressionistic dramatic narrative form of a complex modernist master (Beckett) to translate the fictive narrative of another complex modernist master (Borges) would make the understanding of the story any easier for my target students. Therefore, I chose to compromise with their existing literary preferences, rooted in literary realism, and presented the story in a more conventional dramatic discourse. The exercise, therefore, encouraged the students to turn a Borgesian 'shadow' into a more conventional dramatic character.

As we have seen, Borges only uses four adjectives to describe Kilpatrick – young, heroic, beautiful, assassinated. Along with his social status and mysterious death, the reader has enormous imaginative space to envisage him and his life. In the 'newspaper exercise', the students had already expressed various impressions of this character. In the 'filmmaking exercise' I asked them to turn their attention to defining him through costume and set design (See Appendix B). In role as property masters and set designers, they were asked to construct a private chamber for the general by using props readily available in the classroom - desks, chairs and pieces of white paper, on which they could draw objects they felt belonged there. Their design was

an attempt to present the multiple images of the character. The students in Group 5 decided to divide the chamber into two parts with an embroidered screen, because:

‘He is a well-educated, intelligent person; he may need time thinking, scheming on his own. But he is also busy, lots of people coming to see him every day, so he lets them stay in the living room, only the closest guests would be allowed to get into his private place.’

They also used props to convey his heroic charisma. They placed ‘a red sandalwood table’ in his chamber, on which were placed traditional stationery for Chinese calligraphy and a box of Cuban cigars. As one of them explained, this was intended to signal someone who was ‘elegant, masculine and sexy!’ In the private space, they also included a clothes stand and a cheval mirror. When I questioned them as to whether the two items were against the military and masculine nature that they had just described, one student replied: ‘As a leader, he has to be very careful about his public image. The mirror also reflects his ego and vanity, which goes with being masculine.’

The students who took on the roles of costume and make-up designers also provided interesting items. The first was a pair of wire-rimmed glasses.

Ariel: we want to paint his eye brows very dark and straight, which look fearless and ambitious. But that could be too aggressive; the glasses bring a gentle, scholarly feeling, which would soften the eyes.

Liz: The look of a politician has to be nice, kind and likeable.

Apart from some 1920s costumes, another important item they mentioned is a pocket watch.

Nicole: He is a soldier, the pocket watch helps him to live a disciplined life, and inside the pocket watch, there is a girl's photo. Every time he checks the time, it reminds him of his love. So the audience would feel the character is not too 'hard', he has a softer part, which makes him more likeable.

The group of 'property masters and set designers' had placed in the space a cabinet full of 'the finest whiskey and brandy, and the choicest red wine, too'. The western alcohol, along with the tobacco they had mentioned, suggested:

'He is a revolutionary person, very liberal, that's why the conservative politicians don't like him. His life habit tells you the reason – western alcohol and tobacco suggest he is very much influenced by western culture.'

And on his 'book shelves', they placed some 'antique collections', one of which they mentioned particularly was a very old, chiming clock.

"We know from *Dream in the Red Chamber* that chime clocks were tributary for the Imperial family from western countries, so it suggests that his family has served the old regime. And this could probably be the first foreign thing that he saw in his life; it opened a tiny small gap for the little boy in an old aristocratic family to see the modern western world. That's the very beginning of his departure; he then becomes a rebellious son who later betrays the old regime."

As well as displaying the depth of the students' imaginative engagement and their ability to find complexity in the central character through dramatic means, more interestingly, there are two further elements here which are relevant to the style of Borges's story.

First of all, their explanation of the items resembles the kind of deduction we find in classic detective stories – observing all the details, collecting data and reasoning from there. The original text is inspired by Chesterton and Borges abides to “the strict, problematic nature” of detective narrative in his telling (Borges, 1999, p. 113). I, too, presented the story as a problematic mystery to the students, which they appeared to have sensed in this exercise. More interesting, and more tantalising, are the allusions to time, as represented in the significance given to both the pocket watch and the clock.

Taking the role of costume designer, Nicole explained how the pocket watch could be shown in film scenes.

Nicole: The pocket watch has a strong period feel to it. It is a modern product in 1920s China, and it also signifies time. When he works on strategies either in war or in political struggles, he needs to calculate time to make plans. The image of holding the pocket watch could signify scheming, calculating, playing games; the world is in his hands. The cameraman can give us many close-up shots to show those different meanings. Maybe when he is killed, his pocket watch rolls out, the hands stop working, but you still hear a ticking sound from the inside. All the power games for him stop at that moment, but history moves on.

In the later discussion, I confirmed with Nicole that she had no idea that her final ‘pocket watch scene’ highly resembles the scene of Quentin Compson breaking the crystal of his watch in the novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1931) by William Faulkner. In Faulkner’s novel, the faceless watch has no hands to indicate the time but continues to tick. On the one hand, the resemblance exemplifies Borges’s idea of the repeating mirror image – the pocket watch in Nicole’s description could be Quentin’s watch in *The Sound and the Fury*. They are in a different (literary or fictional) time-space but share a certain mysterious commonality. On the other hand, the image of the watch also embodies a philosophical and modernist understanding of time. In *Irrational Man: A Study In Existential Philosophy* (1958), William Barrett analyzes the watch scene in Faulkner’s novel from the perspective of existentialism. Barrett suggests that “Real time, the time that makes up the dramatic substance of our life, is something deeper and more primordial than watches, clocks, and calendars”. Time is the “substance of Being, as Heidegger would put it” (1958, p.53). Barrett’s idea of time is that it is not “a reckonable sequence” but “an inexhaustible inescapable presence.” (ibid). According to Barrett, modernist writers are often preoccupied by the theme of time, responding to philosophical and scientific developments of the early twentieth century. Borges’s preoccupations – his denial of the successive nature in time – is not the same as Faulkner’s but nonetheless the modernist connection is there and could in this case present a jumping off point for further interrogation, one that has been provided by the students themselves.

8.3.4 Telling and Retelling: the Spiral Mode of Narrative

This particular text is framed within the mirror-effect structure of Shakespeare's plays, and the great complexity and many-layered narrative is based upon the nature of Shakespeare's theatre, I felt that to dramatize the story might provide the students with a stage to investigate these elements.

In my initial plan, the newspaper exercise and the filmmaking exercise shared the same objective – to convey an idea to students that the story of the central character had been told and re-told in different versions, under the influence of various art works, and the public (played by themselves in the drama workshop) had also been enlisted into the spiral mode of this narrative. The realization of this fact only comes when the final truth is disclosed. But the process of uncovering the truth took three steps in the drama design.

The three exercises that I mention below are three steps and also three variations on the theme - 'the traitor and the hero'. Students joined in the drama work, becoming involved in the process of creating the hero/ traitor and his story. The three exercises also work as three layers and, as the teaching progresses, each layer comes off and finally the truth emerges.

The Play's the Thing

The first step was the game 'the traitor and the hero', which I adapted from the game 'Assassin' (See Appendix B). From the interview, most of the students claimed that this was their favourite drama exercise.

I managed to weave most of the dramatic tensions of the story into this game.

In the second round of the game, the hero and the traitor became the same person, and he/she was able to kill any companions whilst manipulating the opinions of others, without being found out. In all the six groups (including the Pilot Study), the students, especially the ones who were 'killed', expressed that they felt completely shocked when the truth was uncovered.

In the pilot and Groups 1, 2 and 5, there were students who pointed out that I had broken the rule by making the hero and the traitor the same person.

Each time I replied that there was no rule that said the hero and the traitor could not be the same person.

In Group 5, Tara was the traitor and the hero, near the end of the game. Only Liz and Ariel were left and they were both absolutely certain that the other must be the traitor. Before I uncovered the fact, they almost wanted to fight with each other.

Liz: No question. It is definitely Ariel!

Ariel: You! Pretending to be innocent again?! Come on, we both know very clearly who the traitor is!

The person who was traitor and hero talked about her feelings after the session.

Tara: It's like sitting on the top of the mountain and watching tigers biting each other to death. 'Killing', fooling and manipulating people did give me a kind of excitement. I can understand the character (Kilpatrick)'s feeling, he may really enjoy doing it.

However, other students felt that, although the game was entertaining, once you thought about it further, it was also frightening because it dramatized how a dangerous man kills his friends but makes other potential victims suspect innocent people; how such deadly manipulation can take place in such a calm way; and how a villain uses people's trust to hurt them whilst maintaining his own image as one of justice and dignity. This could, of course, be a character summary of Edmund in *King Lear*. When I designed the game, all I thought about was how to use the plot to set up the rules. However, once its context had been established, the tension, the interaction and even the whole atmosphere were driven by the nature of the original story.

At this stage, the students did not register the hint I was giving them that in our story the traitor and the hero would be the same person, not yet seeing the game as integral to the drama as a whole. However, its simplicity combined aspects of both the detective story and Shakespearean drama. The final discovery of two characters being, in fact, one is what Borges calls "an avaricious economy of means" (2000, p.113), which is a significant law that meets the strict, problematic nature of the classic detective story; at the same time, pretending, performing under a double mask, being in role in a fictional context whilst simultaneously acting another role, are illustrative of Shakespeare's multi-layered stagecraft (Bate, 2010, p.112) already referred to. This combination made some students in Groups 1, 3, 4, and 5 claim that 'it is after all a play!' and 'we all have been played!' By the first 'play', they were referring to the dramatic nature of this game, whereas the second word, 'played', meant that they realised that they had been terribly deceived and

manipulated; yet paradoxically – the paradox of both drama and the detective story – they had engaged in this ‘play’ joyfully and delighted in the success of the deceit.

‘It must be by His Death’

The second step preceded the exercise of ‘the night before the assassination’ (See Appendix B). I was in role as the conspirator (Nolan in the original) telling the hero/traitor (played by a student) that he would die as a hero the following day.

In Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, certain students guessed that the assassination was a conspiracy designed by some higher authority or secret organization. Only the student Patrick in Group 4 realised the truth, declaring ‘he is a traitor, and his people have found it out. Telling the truth would damage their political objectives so they have staged his death as an assassination, so people will worship him even more.’

In Group 5, one student mentioned the ‘higher power’ by using her historical knowledge.

Toby: I wonder if it is the foreigners? China was a half-colonized country then. Is it an Imperialist power manipulating the whole thing?

I have discussed this kind of common reader’s response above. In their group discussion, other students provided another suggestion as to why he had to die.

Helen (who had been in role as the hero/traitor before): I knew I was going to die. But why did I sit there waiting for it?! Why must I stay there and act out your script? And you've even got the script ready!

Toby: Why can't you fake his death?

Helen: Maybe he is willing to die.

Liz: If he doesn't run away, it means he has no place to go.

Ariel: Maybe he must die!

Tara: I think he knows he has to die anyway. If he follows this script, he dies as a hero, which is at least honourable.

This exercise echoes a famous saying of Borges from *The Garden of the Forking Paths* – “the future already exists” (1970, p. 54). The most straightforward reading would be that, when Kilpatrick's role as a traitor had been found out by Nolan, he was already dead. However, these students' responses inspire another reading. Their words ‘he must die’, ‘he has to die anyway’, ‘he has no place to go’, all echo Brutus's line before he kills Caesar in Shakespeare's play – ‘It must be by his death’, thus mirroring the cyclical nature of time contained in the line from the original text – “before having been Fergus Kilpatrick, Fergus Kilpatrick was Julius Caesar” (1970, p.103).

All the World's a Stage

The final step for the final discovery was told in the form of the biographer's journal, which imitates the fictive discourse of the original. It was followed by the exercise ‘the last 24 hours of the hero’ and the second newspaper exercise, in which students participated in the process of creating the image

of the hero through artistic/ fictional forms (film and unfaithful news report). In this journal, the biographer refers to the game 'the traitor and the hero' (See Appendix B) played in the first step, but instead of stating the final discovery clearly, I told the students that the last page was missing, the same rhetorical device that Borges himself applies in *The Garden of the Forking Paths*³¹.

After reading this journal to the students, I asked them if they had figured out the truth. Some students as typical 'common readers' showed their innocent curiosity once more.

Toby: My god, it is so scary. So who directed the whole thing? You said 'the great playwright', who is he?

But there were students who solved the mystery.

Liz & Helen (to Toby): It is Shakespeare!

And they also realised all the drama work they had been involved in was not presenting 'real history' in a fictional context, not even an artistic retelling of real history, but completely a political conspiracy (not real) set up by great literature (not real again) within the context of a fictional story (still not real).

Liz: The whole thing, the entire ... whole...drama stuff...everything basically, is overall a play, and we are all actors!

Helen: it is history imitating literature!

³¹*The Garden of the Forking Paths* is mainly told as Yu Tsun's confession, but the first two pages of the document are missing.

The telling and retelling of the hero's story in various versions, and letting students join in the process of re-making the story in dramatic form, had finally performed their magic. No-one has summarised the whole experience better than Shakespeare –

“All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players.”

8.3.5 Epilogue: The Mirror Image in Real Life

Patrick joined my fieldwork with Group 4 completely by chance. On the day of the workshop, a few students had failed to show up and there were not enough of them to run it properly. One participant went immediately to Patrick's flat and literally dragged him out of his bed. He came to the drama classroom half asleep but later discovered that he was involved in a story written by an Argentine writer that greatly resembled a story from his own family history.

Patrick's great-grandfather was also assassinated. He was one of the first graduates from the Whampoa Military Academy³², and went on to become a commander in the nationalist government in Nanjing. In Patrick's own words, he was 'a brilliant soldier, but an unqualified politician'. In 1937, after losing the Battle of Shanghai to the Japanese, the central government of China knew that the fall of the capital, Nanjing, was just a matter of time. Therefore the whole government of China moved to Chongqing, but Patrick's great-

³²The Whampoa Military Academy was built in 1924 by Sun Yat-sen, the first president of the Republic of China. It is the most prestigious military academy in modern Chinese history, which produced many military personnel who fought in the wars in the twentieth century, including the Northern Expedition, the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War.

grandfather was commissioned to stay and organize the military defence of Nanjing, because he was not 'popular' with any political faction.

Patrick: He died because he met the Japanese and refused to surrender. One of his colleagues betrayed him, leaked his schedule to the Japanese. He was killed a few days later, near a bridge. I vividly remember the details I was told. The Japanese assassins surrounded him by the bridge. He shot two or three of them, got away to the river, jumped into the water with his guards. But because he wore a silk shirt on that day, the fabric was so light that it floated on the water. The assassins saw it straight away. Everyone survived apart from himself.

The story of Patrick's great-grandfather is very much like Kilpatrick's. They were both young, handsome, assassinated politicians. 'He died young,' Patrick told me, 'like your character. I saw his photos and he was very handsome, also like your character.' But the most significant similarity is that his own heroic death was brought about by his own people and is open to different and opposing perspectives.

Patrick: Great-grandfather's death can be told in a rather heroic and patriotic way, it depends on who tells his story. You can say he was killed by the Japanese. But in fact he was killed by his own people; his death was a result of the Chinese politicians' power struggle. They deliberately left him in a city doomed to fall, they knew he couldn't surrender. There was no choice, not just because he was a soldier of integrity. In that situation no one could afford openly to

betray their own country. So the Japanese would definitely kill him, which was exactly what his own people wanted.

This military commander is like a mirror image of Borges' in 1930s China. Apart from the story itself, Patrick told me that he, too, felt his own parallel role – 'I am like the biographer, telling the story of MY great-grandfather.'

I do not think Patrick was seeking any self-understanding or sympathy from his personal relationship with Borges's story. His great-grandfather's death happened so long ago that he was able to distance himself from it. What excited him were the mirror-effects and parallels he could see.

Patrick: I'm always interested in history, how history repeats history. But today I'm fascinated by the fact that a writer whom I never knew could tell me a story that just echoes my own family history. Even the ways of telling (great-grandchild telling the story) are exactly the same.

As I discussed in the textual analysis, Borges believes in a mysterious rule which holds autonomous moments together, so he seeks for the common features and similarities of different events and is fascinated by repetitions. In this particular text, he applied Shakespeare's plays to construct the mirror-effect structure, for the universal and timeless nature of Shakespeare's works makes the repetition of the theme of 'the traitor and the hero' take on different variations through time and space. Because Shakespeare is "the Maker or archetypal poet", "the archetypal man", "being everyone and anyone" (Bloom, 1995, p. 473), his depiction of human nature and politics in

Julius Caesar may well happen again on the stage of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

However, universal human nature would be an over-simplified explanation of such a mysteriously neat coincidence.

Patrick: We were taught that history is like a grand wheel, it goes forward, and we ordinary human beings are too humble to change its route, it is a whole generation that pushes history forward. But when I imagine 'what if', I feel history could be changed by so many little incidents. My great-grandfather may not be that important to Chinese history, but he certainly is to our family history. What if he had worn a cotton shirt, he could have survived. My grandma was born on the day Nanjing fell, the day the Nanjing Massacre began, and her mum died giving birth to her. If great-grandfather had been alive, grandma would not have become an orphan, they would have moved to Taiwan or America before 1949, and neither my mother nor I would be in the world. I would not have been sitting here and talking to you. You see, that was all because he wore a silk shirt on that day.

Patrick asked a series of questions of 'what if', and imagined the other possible consequences that could have befallen his family. He was reasoning according to suppositions based upon causal relationships and the successive nature of time. However, such suppositions illustrate Borges's denial of temporal succession, for the various possibilities that Patrick imagined are just like the infinite forking paths that Borges depicts. Patrick's

doubts about time actually begin with his questioning of the historical materialism that Chinese students learn at school, and his suppositions about his non-existent family history call to mind what Borges argues, through the voice of Albert in *The garden of Forking Paths*, “your ancestor did not believe in a uniform, absolute time. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a growing, dizzying net of divergent, convergent and parallel times. This network of time ... embraces all possibilities of time”(1970, p.53). It is interesting to compare Patrick’s wondering that he would not exist if his great grandfather had worn a different shirt with Albert’s words, “We do not exist in the majority of these times; in some you exist, and not I; in others I, and not you, in others, both of us” (ibid).

Chance happens. Patrick was a completely irrelevant person to my fieldwork, but was literally dragged into the story, into Borges’s story, by chance. More strangely, his story became part of the mirror labyrinth that Borges creates. When he left the drama studio I was left sitting in an empty space, still recovering from such a surprising coincidence. I could sense Borges’s ghost looking over my shoulder and smiling, ‘Look, I told you.’ Like Ryan who understands that he forms part of Nolan’s plot, I also sensed that I, too, formed part of Borges’s story, that ‘the future already exists’, as Borges had foreseen.

Chapter 9

Analysis of Issues Emerging From Both Cases

Throughout the whole process of research, there were a number of issues in both of the cases that emerged from the drama work and the teaching practice. These data were categorized under the following headings: literary horizon; translation (narrative technique and culture); socio-historical background; and literary community. I proceeded to analyse these data, using the following questions to guide me:

- How well did the drama exercises transfer the narrative techniques deployed in the two original texts that were intended to blur the boundary between reality and fiction?
- How does popular culture, especially film and TV series in drama form, appear to have affected the imaginings of time and history displayed by these young people? And how do these imaginings of the past appear to have shaped their understandings of these two literary works?
- In what ways did the temporary literary community established in the drama classroom affect students' understanding of - and engagement with - the texts?

9.1 Introducing the Idea of 'the Fictional'

As I discussed in the literature review, modernist literature involved a radical deviation from the traditions of literary realism (Bulter, 2010; Childs, 2007; Faulkner, 1977). In terms of the short story, Childs describes the change as

“from the slice-of-life realism of the mid-nineteenth century to the richly allusive and ambiguous prose meditation of the mid-twentieth” (2007, p.99). The editor of the senior high school literary textbook, Wu Xiaodong, has said in interview that introducing four selected modernist texts³³ to Chinese students was an attempt to introduce “an important literary thought” – “the fictional³⁴”. Wu reckons that Chinese students need to be made aware of this new literary horizon, different from reflectionist theory, because “the imaginary world in modernist fiction cannot be explained by the logic of realism” (2009, p.7).

In this section, I will discuss how participatory drama was used to help students to understand the transition from a realist tradition to the modernist literary imagination. Since literary modernism breaks many of the conventions of realism and naturalism, especially in terms of narrative (Childs, 2007, p.81), I used a variety of drama exercises intended to help students experience the narrative techniques that modernist writers use in order to cross the boundary between ‘the real’ and ‘the fictional’. This I would describe as a poetic approach to teaching literary works; by this I mean I start from a study of the form rather than its meaning, which latter would constitute a hermeneutic approach. By reflecting on the data, I shall examine the effectiveness of the drama design, and I will also discuss some relevant issues that emerged, including the mix of different literary discourses and literary genres, the exotic other, and the sense of time/history.

³³ The four texts that Wu selected for the textbook are: *A Hunger Artist* by Franz Kafka, the first chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *The Book of Sand* Jorge Luis Borges, and *How Wang-Fo was Saved* by Marguerite Yourcenar (Wu, 2009, p.7).

9.1.1 The Boundary between the Real and the Fictional

By triangulating the data collected from observation and interview, I found that the five groups of students tended to understand stories first and foremost through genre; and that any loosening of the boundaries of specific genres within a story tended to confuse them.

In the interview with Group 3, I asked the students if the socio-historical background matters in their understanding of literature. A student gave the following answer:

Lucy: it really depends. If you read romantic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, the socio-historical background is really not that important.

Other students in the group agreed with this and they added other genres – fairy tale, folk tale, legend, and ghost story, all of which can be loosely categorized as ‘fantasy’. Science fiction also has fantastical elements and even romantic fiction, ‘only exists in your imagination’ in Lucy’s words.

We can see that the students used literary genre to classify the works they read, and the classification determined whether they would activate the realist horizon or not (in which socio-historical background is a key element). They could well accept magic and other supernatural phenomena (including romantic love!) in fantastical literary genres. Yet works outside this category they would read through the lens of realism. Such an understanding was quite common within the five groups. In the class of *How Wang-Fo was Saved*, there were always students in every group trying to check the genre of this story, and supernatural power was their touchstone.

In the exercise in which they took on the role of people begging for Wang-Fo to paint, students in all five of the groups asked me - 'Can he really make his pictures come to life?' I always answered 'no' according to the original text. Therefore they took the story as realistic. Although Freya and Penny in Group 3, Cora and Jessica in Group 4, Ariel and Helen in Group 5 all said that the 'language' (by which they meant the 'discourse') reminded them of the images in Japanese folktales, *Arabian Nights*, and Hans Andersen's fairy tales, they only saw it as the author's 'fancy prose' not, in fact, as a discourse deliberately adopted by the author for specific narrative purposes. Yet this assumption was challenged later when I read out the ending of the story. Again, in every group there were students asking 'is he really dead or saved by magic?' In the final group, students even stood on two different sides and had a debate.

Group 5

Tara: So he is actually dead. Being saved by art is purely metaphorical – art triumphs over power. But he is killed, isn't he?

Toby: I think he is dead. He is not Liang in *The Magic Paintbrush*, he doesn't have magic power.

Helen: It is art that performs the magic.

Ariel: The story is a fairy tale, a miracle happens.

Tara: I still think disappearing in the picture is an artistic way of showing his death – he dies in real world, but lives in art forever.

Helen: It is like *the Butterfly Lovers*³⁵, walking into the picture is like turning into butterflies. He goes to another world.

Moreover, they found that even the logic of fantasy could not fully answer their confusions.

Ariel: But why doesn't Wang-Fo use the water to drown the Emperor? Like Liang in *the Magic Paintbrush*?

Toby: Yes! And how come the Emperor and his ministers stand there without doing anything? Isn't a fairy tale supposed to end up with the evil being killed and the hero being saved? It is only half done here.

Their debate shows their struggle to classify the tale according to a literary genre in order to comprehend it. Many students saw Yourcenar's story as a fantasy. Ariel insisted that the story of Wang-Fo is a 'fairy tale'. Helen used her literary experience of Chinese legends to make sense of it, whereas some, like Toby and Tara, saw it as a story set in the real world; as Tara said in the later interview, half accusing me, 'You told me that he doesn't have magical powers!'

Yourcenar's story, however, defies categorisation according to such literary genres. It is an imaginary work but not an archetypal fairy tale or legend and the students realised this but were puzzled by it. Ariel and Toby's responses, especially the difference between this story and *the Magic Paintbrush* that

³⁵*The Butterfly Lovers* is a Chinese legend and a tragic love story. Liang Shanbo (梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai (祝英台) fall in love when Zhu disguises herself as a man and studies in an academy with Liang in Hangzhou. But Zhu's parents have arranged for her to marry a man from a rich family. The poor scholar Liang dies heartbroken. On Zhu's wedding day, she pays a visit at Liang's grave, the thunder opens the grave and she throws herself into it to join her lover. Their spirits then turn into butterflies.

they noted, reveal that they were aware that it does not strictly follow the classic pattern of 'overcoming the monster' found in traditional stories (Warner, 1994).

In fact, modernist literature tends to defy such genre classification. Borges suggests that "literary genres may depend less on the texts than on the way texts are read." (2000, p.491). On the one hand, he is emphasizing here the role of the reader, "The aesthetic event requires the conjunction of reader and text; only then does it exist" (ibid), which echoes reception theory, of course, and the students' different readings of the ending of *Wang-Fo* lend weight to this point. On the other hand, his comment also points to the complexity of narrative and literary discourse, which may cross the boundaries between genres. For "the nature of literary discourse", as Todorov reminds us, "is to go beyond – otherwise it would have no reason for being" (1993, p.137). Modernist literature is particularly good at this. Borges's own writing is a perfect example. *The Garden of Forking Paths* for instance, mixes the elements of historical fiction, detective story, fantasy and metaphysical fiction.

In the interview, a girl in Group 3 shared her experience of using a realist approach to the reading of a modern classic *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka, a text she had studied at senior high school. It is a typical example of a conventional understanding of literary genres facing a modernist text.

Eva: I found the story completely bizarre! How come a real human being suddenly transforms into a giant insect? How come his family just accept it and no one even thinks of taking him to a hospital?

As Todorov explains, Kafka's story begins with a supernatural event but the narrative gives it "an increasingly natural atmosphere until the end" (1993, p.140). To Todorov, the two "apparently incompatible" narratives are brilliantly combined together by Kafka, but to students, this combination of narrative can cause confusion. Eva noticed the natural atmosphere, hence expected *The Metamorphosis* to suit the logic of literary realism or naturalism; but 'the fantastic' elements go beyond this logic and this is what confused her.

9.1.2 Coleridge's Flower: Crossing the Boundary

As I discussed in the textual analysis, Borges's short stories have been regarded by some critics as fantasies (Bloom, 2002), and in *Oriental Tales*, Yourcenar retells the stories from the East drawing from the narrative forms of folk tale, myth and fantasia. (Czynaski, 1987). Both of the texts could be used to help students see the breaking up of a realist tradition. In the two cases, I used a poetic approach – trying to use drama exercises to reflect the narrative techniques that the authors use to cross the boundary between the real and the fantastic. What I was trying to present to students is perfectly put by Calvino, "the main thing in a narrative is not the explanation of an extraordinary event, but the order of things that this extraordinary event produces in itself and around it" (1970, p.134). By this I take him to mean that what matters is not the content of the story but the form that the artist uses to present it.

In the essay *Coleridge's flower*, Borges cites Coleridge's words:

‘If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found that flower in his hand when he awoke – Ay! - and what then?’ (2000, p. 240).

Passing through Paradise in a dream is nothing surprising, but the fact that a flower from Paradise in a dream truly exists in real life is. Here, I would suggest, lies the poetic function of ‘Coleridge’s flower’; this particular flower is a poetic device, a medium that connects reality and fantasy. In *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, Borges uses exquisite skills, sewing up the gap between the real world and a fictional world, which includes providing precise historical background and making up literary references by real writers (such as how Browning and Hugo have illustrated Kilpatrick in their verses), mixing the discourses of fiction and non-fiction in the process. The boundary between the real and the fantastic thus becomes mysterious in the infinite mirror-effects he produces.

In the workshop on Borges’s story, I tried to imitate the multi-layered mirror-effect structure of the original story through the newspaper exercise and the film-making exercise, and these attempts only achieved relatively acceptable results with the last two groups (Please see Ch. 8 for more details). The drama exercises that I played with the last two groups, especially with Group 5, were designed to enable students to play between the real and the fantastic. Students knew the whole context of the drama and the story to be fictional, but in the first newspaper exercise, the familiar discourse of

journalism made them apply real life experience and historical knowledge to make sense of the character of the traitor / hero.

In the film-making exercise and the second newspaper exercise, students were fully aware that all costume design, film-acting and newspaper writing were pretence within the fictional context of the drama game. And in the second newspaper exercise, when they were trying to report the assassination to cater to their readers' interests (the tabloid paper's report), and to manipulate public opinion (the government mouthpiece's report), they deliberately added 'fictional' elements in their reports, such as creating a romantic atmosphere, or suggesting that the assassination was conducted by their political opponents. In other words, their news reports were pretending within a context that was itself pretence, acting out a play within a play. Moreover, the writing style or the discourse of the news reports, as well as the political game which they played in their writing, were half from their experience of social life (real), and half from their knowledge of literary, historical art works (fictional). The drama design was constructed through various interplays between what is real and what is fantasy. To borrow Nabokov's metaphor in *Lectures on literature* (1980, p.5), the drama exercises imitated the process of the artist building the castle (the fiction / fantasy) with cards (the materials from real life, history and art works), during the process, they witnessed the magic (the narrative technique/ the literary discourse) turning "the castle of cards" into "a castle of beautiful steel and glass". But what makes this story even more extraordinary is that the final discovery turns the enchanted world upside down. Borges dispels the magic himself, the beautiful castle turning back into a handful of cards, at the end

when we learn that the story of the hero is an invented fantasy. And in the drama class, when I uncovered the final truth, Liz and Helen in Group 5 expressed their immediate response to the interplay between reality and fiction: 'it is a play, and we are all actors.'

I have to admit that although students were engaged in the drama exercises, it is hard to investigate whether they could understand the complex narrative skills and the literary discourses played out in the exercises as described here. In fact, I am not optimistic about the result. In the interview, I asked seven students from Groups 4 and 5 to talk about their feelings of having read Borges's original text. Only three had gone on to read it, the others telling me that they were 'not interested in politics and history'. The three who had read it complained that it was 'too complex', and 'weird'. Two expressed their feelings as follows.

Helen: It is not at all like what I expected. It is more like literary criticism than a story!

Toby: I have never seen any story told in such a way. I was looking for more details about the conspiracy, for character development, but there aren't any.

Helen's response shows that she could recognize the innovative literary discourse in the original text but both Toby and she found such a new form difficult to appreciate. Moreover, they did not see the connection or the parallels between the drama and the text; the participatory drama had aroused curiosity in the storyline and characterization, entrenched in the realm of realist conventions.

These findings inform me that participatory drama as pedagogy has certain limits. Although the drama exercises had modelled the kind of narrative innovations and literary discourses at play in the story, such complex literary notions need to be further explained, something that I will return to in the conclusion.

As I mentioned before, Borges blurs the boundary between reality and fantasy, sewing fragments from both together into a seamless, magic robe. With him, Coleridge's flower acts as a complex system. However, in Yourcenar's case, the crossing of the boundary is more straightforward. All of a sudden, water flows over the palace from Wang-Fo's picture. Wang-Fo's escape resembles a magical flight to another world, as in folktales. The sea and the rowboat in his picture connect the real world and the fantasy land; and, just as with Coleridge's flower, this picture is left in the real world of the palace as a witness to this fantasy. I ended the workshop by emphasizing the image of this picture (See Appendix B). In my field work, I tried three different ways to translate the final scene into classroom drama, but Coleridge's flower only connected the real and the fantasy in the last of these.

In my initial design, which I conducted with Groups 1, 2, and 3, I gave students coloured cloth and bamboo sticks and asked them to use these minimal props to act out the scene of Wang-Fo walking into the picture. I thought that the cloth and the sticks could signify the water and the rowboat, but overlooked that the space of the Emperor's palace and the space of Wang-Fo's picture are in two different dimensions. The final scene needed

the actors to step from one space into another. Students in all three groups struggled to present this.

The second plan I tried, with Group 4, was to let students sit in a circle and read the ending out. However, this did not satisfy me either. With the final group, I applied the techniques of storytelling theatre (Alfreds, 2013). In the exercise of 'the trial of Wang-Fo', I had already asked students to use chairs and desks to create the space of the Emperor's palace. Moving into the final scene, I invited one of the students to sit on the throne as the Emperor, and others to stand on both sides as the Emperor's ministers. I placed on the floor a large piece of blank paper and a Chinese paintbrush. When the music started, I became the narrator and told the story in the third person. During the storytelling, I switched my voice between the narrator and Wang-Fo by picking up/putting down the paintbrush. When the story reached the point when Wang-Fo's picture becomes real, I lifted the paper as a background, took out a paper boat and presented the rest of the story as a puppet show that ended with the paper boat sailing behind the blank sheet of paper. And one student claimed that this was her favourite part of the session.

Helen: I like the ending of Wang-Fo. You asked us to use chairs and desks to build the palace. When I sat there, I felt the geography, the image of the palace was half there and half in my imagination.

Especially when you were in role as Wang-Fo, bent down on the floor and painting on the blank paper whilst telling us the story, my imagination was following your narration and was automatically projected on to that paper. Because it was blank, I could vividly see the

sea, the boat, and the swallows, like moving images on it. And when the story finished, the paper was left on the floor with nothing on it, so I felt Wang-Fo had really disappeared into it, into that exact piece of paper!

In Helen's words, the blank paper used in this exercise had become Coleridge's flower. Within the context of the story, it links the real world (the palace) and the fantasy land (the magic world that Wang-Fo goes into); and in the context of teaching, the paper connected the world of reality (the drama class/the student herself) and the world of the fantasy (the story of Wang-Fo). She enjoyed this fictional story, like passing through the garden of Paradise in a dream, and woke up at the moment when the story ended. But the blank paper was left on the floor. Because this piece of paper resembles certain aspects of the picture in the story – the fictional characters disappear into it - and also because she communicated with the story through it, it became her flower, and when it lost its magic as the story ended, it remained as a concrete witness to the imagined journey she had been on.

9.1.3 The World of Fantasies

The Exotic Other

What is the Orient, then? It is above all a world of extremes in which people are very unhappy or very happy, very rich or very poor. A world of kings who do not have to explain what they do. Of kings who are, we might say, as irresponsible as gods.

Borges (1984, p.570)

Yourcenar sets *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* in ancient China, and the collection which includes the story is entitled *Oriental Tales*. Although *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* is not set in China, Borges is also fascinated by the idea of ‘the Orient’ (and I adapted the setting to 1920s China– a modern era in a half-colonized country in the Far East). The image of China has appeared in many of his works, such as the short story *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1970), the essay *P’u Sung-ling The Tiger Guest* (2000), the translation of *The Dream of a Butterfly* by Chuang Tzu (cited in Kristal, 2002), as well as other writings.

The image of China is very frequently seen in western literature in the 20th century – *The Great Wall of China* by Kafka (1991), *Invisible Cities* by Calvino (1997), *The Good Person of Szechwan* by Brecht (1966) and Ezra Pound’s translation of ancient Chinese poetry (1915). The West’s literary imagination of China in modernist literature could, of course, provoke discussion through the critical lenses of orientalism and post - colonialism, but here I wish mainly to focus on the analysis of the image of China as a poetic device, of how the Chinese setting blurs the boundary of the real and the fantastic. Moreover, by reflecting on the data, I will also compare the difference between the western imagination of China in the literary text and Chinese students’ perceptions of such images in the drama schemes.

The image of China

In his celebrated short story *The Aleph*, Borges created a small iridescent sphere called the Aleph and people who gaze into it can see the whole universe. At the end of the story, the shining sphere is destroyed and the

house that keeps the Aleph is pulled down. In his commentary, Borges explains the reason for the ending:

“In the world of the *Arabian Nights*, such things as magic lamps and rings are left lying about and nobody cares; in our skeptical world, we have to tidy up any alarming or out-of-the-way element.” (1971, p.189).

In other words, the Aleph’s ultimate disappearance is an act by which Borges restores reality (“our skeptical world”) at the end of the story.

Correspondingly, there is a world into which the fantastical and mysterious imagination can fit; the world of the *Arabian Nights*, for example, which is a world of fantasies. To borrow Borges’s own metaphor, the loss of magic lamps and rings are like “water which would disappear in water” (2001, p.79), because “the best place to hide a leaf is in a forest”. In his story *The Book of Sand*, for example, the book of the title is hidden among the nine hundred thousand volumes in the Argentine national library (2001, p.93).

Both Borges and Yourcenar have included images of a fantastical and mysterious ancient China in their Oriental stories. China is an ideal background on which to stage such stories, for China itself is like the world of the *Arabian Nights* to the western reader, a land where fantasies and supernatural events would not seem out of place. From the perspective of aesthetics rather than ethics, this particular effect of the Chinese setting can be explained by Victor Segalen’s definition of exoticism. Segalen understands exoticism as “the aesthetics of diversity”, and writes in his fragmentary style: “Exoticism in time. Behind us: history. Escape from the contemptible, mean-spirited present. Elsewhere and once upon a time. The

not-yet” (Cited in Todorov, 1993, p.324). In other words, Segalen sees that time and geographical distance create a mysterious appeal. Todorov (1993) argues that the exotic experience that Segalen champions is not based on any real understanding of the other culture; on the contrary, the process of familiarising actually destroys the so-called ‘aesthetic of diversity’ (Segalen, 2002), for it diminishes the mystery.

The fantastical elements as literary devices allow the author to cross the boundaries between the real and fantasy, to establish a set of laws beyond the causal relations we know. However, the fact remains that the fantastical image of China portrayed in those literary works is not faithful to the real historical image of China. So a question pertinent to my analysis arises: if these exotic images of China serve the aesthetics of fantasy narratives, will they perform the same function for Chinese readers? Would Chinese students who have been immersed in Chinese culture accept fantasy and mystery taking place in a country that is familiar to them?

The Influence of Popular Culture

The two stories as told in the drama schemes provided students with two different contexts of China in the past, one being 1920s Beijing, and the other being the ancient China of an indefinable era. From the data collected in the field work, I find that the images of China presented by the five groups of students are rather different from the western narrative; however, this does not mean that the students’ imaginations are faithful to any real historical image. To some extent, they, too, can be viewed as exotic

fantasies, this despite the fact that these students articulated an allegiance to the principles of social realism in fiction.

First, I found that most students used resources drawn from popular culture, especially film and TV series, to establish their image of China, which were reflected in their performances of gesture and movement, in the discourse they applied in their speech and dialogue, and in the historical details that they added to help actualise the drama context.

In the workshop of *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*, many students enjoyed performing the ancient etiquette; however their movements and gestures committed many obvious historical errors. A very typical example is in the exercise ‘the trial of Wang-Fo’ in Group 3. Lynn, the student, was in role as Wang-Fo. She shook her sleeves off, kneeled down in front of the ‘Emperor’ (played by myself) and referred to herself as ‘your humble servant’ whilst talking to the ‘Emperor’. Another student, Wendy, gave a curtsy to the ‘Emperor’ when she was in role as Wang-Fo. The salute that Lynn gave and the way she referred to herself are from the etiquettes of the Manchus in the Qing Dynasty, and Wendy’s curtsy is a formal greeting that only women performed in ancient China. But Wang-Fo is not female, and Wang is a common family surname among the Han Chinese, which strongly suggests that the character is not at all Manchu. Therefore, we can state with some assurance that the greetings that they gave in the drama work were both incorrect.

As for the discourse they used in the drama exercise, I found that students consciously tried to use dated phrases and sentence forms to compose their

speech and conversation. For example, in Groups 1, 3, and 4, some students chose, in role as the Emperor's concubine, to persuade the Emperor not to kill Wang-Fo. The three speeches all began with 'Your Majesty, in my humble opinion³⁶...', and ended with 'I simply propose, and god disposes³⁷'; when the concubine suggested that the Emperor use Wang-Fo's painting to 'colour the Empire up', or as a 'blueprint to build the ideal society', the three speeches all described the effect of art as ' 'Tis truly the best of the best³⁸, and ' 'tis the humble man's fortune and honour³⁹'. By analysing the discourse of their speeches, I find that the students were trying to imitate the written vernacular Chinese, which is based on Mandarin Chinese used in novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties (about 14th – 19th century). The few sentence forms I list above are quite regularly used in the 18th century novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. On the one hand, it shows that they might have got their historical data from fictional rather than real historical sources, although most of them had deeply-rooted realistic horizons in mind and valued the role of real historical knowledge to aid literary understanding; on the other hand, the imitation of the old discourse remained on a superficial level and merely worked on adding a touch of the ancient to their drama work. Their speech also displayed a modern use of language (the word 'blueprint' certainly did not exist in ancient Chinese vocabulary) and some even committed grammatical errors. The most commonly made mistake was the abuse of Classical Chinese lexicons such

³⁶In Chinese:臣妾私心想着

³⁷In Chinese:臣妾愚见，皇上圣裁

³⁸In Chinese:也是极好的

³⁹In Chinese:也是他的福气

as zhi, hu, zhe, ye, qi, yan, er⁴⁰ in their speeches. They firstly applied the language strictly categorized as written language in oral form, and secondly, most of the Classical Chinese lexicons they used work as modal particles, which means they were not working on the sentence form or the vocabulary, but only on adding an ‘ancient’ tone to their speech. More detailed discussion on the reasons of such phenomenon will be discussed in the later section, where I consider ‘the pastiche images of popular culture’.

I set the story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* in the 1920s, so students did not feel that they had to perform ancient etiquettes or try to mimic dated language. But to create the period feeling of ‘the Republic of China’ (from 1912 to 1949, as Chinese students understand it), they spontaneously added some historical details. In Groups 1 and 3, students decided to depict the conspirators who assassinated the traitor/hero as secret agents from the Investigation and Statistics Bureau; and the students in role as conspirators in Group 3 even addressed each other using official titles drawn from the Nationalist Government⁴¹ office and rank system. However, the Investigation and Statistics Bureau, the intelligence agency of the Republic of China, was established in 1927. And the year of 1927 is marked as a milestone in Chinese history, for it is the year the Northern Expedition ended and the Kuomintang party declared the establishment of its central government in Nanjing. In the story, I clearly informed the students that the story was set *before* the Northern Expedition, which means the intelligence agency and the ranking system they used in their drama works did not yet exist in the

⁴⁰ Zhi - 之; hu - 乎; zhe - 者; ye - 也; qi - 其; yan - 焉; er - 而;

⁴¹ The Nationalist government is the government of the Republic of China from 1927 to 1948, which was led by the Kuomintang (KMT) party.

historical context of the story. Another historical error the five groups all committed was using the phrase ‘the party-state’, which became the official policy of China only after 1927. Even Patrick, one of the students in Group 3 who was enthusiastic about Chinese history and showed a decent historical knowledge in the workshop, also made the same mistake. Since the year of 1927 is one of the most important historical milestones studies in the Chinese curriculum, the details above should be well known to any Chinese student who has been to secondary school, so it is not only disappointing but ironic that even students from one of the most prestigious universities in China and the ones who studied at one of the Top 10 universities in the UK showed a lack of basic knowledge that all secondary school students are expected to have.

In the interview, the students answered that costume drama and film were the main source of the inspirations that helped them to imagine 1920s society and ancient China.

Jessica: The language we used in Wang-Fo is very much influenced by the TV series *Empresses in the Palace*. And films and TV series about secret agents are becoming popular in China recently, like *Lurk* (2009). We got many historical details from those works.

Sally: many spy stories on TV are set in the period of ‘the Republic of China’ – a communist spy gets into the Kuomintang government or is dealing with the Japanese, such as *The Message* (2009), *Lurk* (2009).

The TV series *Empresses in the Palace* is set in the Qing Dynasty, and its language has adapted the style of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. When it

came out in 2012, this series had massive success and even caused a phenomenon that many Chinese audiences began to mimic the language style of the TV series in their daily conversations (Huang, 2012). I have mentioned above that in the drama exercise, students seemed to be pleased that they had imitated the style so effortlessly without in any sense realising the grammatical errors they had made.

It is worth noting that in the pilot study, I tried to make the students work on the dialogue in the style of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, but no one could manage the task. How come, then, that Groups 3, 4 and 5 applied the 'red chamber style' in a similar way to the hundreds of thousands of audience members for this TV series? The possible answers may be 1) as this 76 episode TV series had only just started when I conducted my pilot study, and had yet to hit its peak viewing figures, the students in the pilot study might not have been familiar with it yet; 2) students might not have related this popular TV series to a Chinese classic, and the fact is that the producers of the TV series only started to refer to the influence of *Dream of the Red Chamber* on this programme much later (2012).

Another question is whether the difficulty of imitating the language styles of *Dream of the Red Chamber* and that of *Empresses in the Palace* are equivalent. As the Chinese writer and translator, Huang Yuning⁴², writes in her column for The New York Times (Chinese –Simplified version), the language style of the TV series has “spread around like virus”, which shows that the language play of audiences “does not need much literary knowledge

⁴² Huang is well-known in China as the translator of Ian McEwan's novels. She has translated *On Chesil Beach*, *Solar* and *Sweet Tooth*.

and rhetorical technique”, but only needs to “take a few modal particles and copy the simplest sentence forms from *Dream in the Red Chamber*” (2012), which is exactly what those students did in their drama work.

In addition, the TV series and the films about secret agents that students mentioned are set during the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). To avoid sensitive political issues, I deliberately set this story in the 1920s, before these two controversial and politically sensitive periods. But it seems my concerns did not affect these students, who did not appear to be concerned whether the resources they drew from their acquaintance with popular culture fitted the context of this story or not; and who were not even aware of the mistakes of historical detail that they were making in their drama work.

The Pastiche Images of Popular Culture

Both questionnaire and interview show that these young readers valued the importance of the socio-historical background in literary understanding (see Ch. 6), however ironically their responses in class, as exemplified in the previous section, reveal that they were, in fact, lacking basic historical knowledge and had only a muddled sense of historical time. The image of the past in their minds during these exercises consisted of vaguely ancient atmospheric and stylistic peculiarities created by mass culture. A student’s answer in the interview supports this point,

Q: Do you know the difference between different decades in the whole period of ‘the Republic of China’?

Helen: I am sure there are differences. The 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s must have different images. But to me, the Republic of China is an ‘atmosphere’ - Beijing’s courtyard house, a lady’s cheongsam⁴³, government officials having parties, famous intellectuals in an art salon, and war. It is a feeling of nostalgia.

I asked a further question – why did you use film and TV series as historical references rather than proper history books?

Tara: We all learnt history at school. But that history is all about facts. And other history books (other than textbooks) still seem to be distant. To me, either ancient China or the 1920s in the history I learnt are just a series of dates, places, names and events. I couldn’t see a live image of the past. At least film and TV series give me a feeling – ah that’s what they looked like, that’s how they lived their lives.

Helen’s answer contributes two important words – atmosphere and nostalgia. And Tara mentioned the importance of historical ‘feeling’ in her perception. Fredric Jameson (1985) argues that the so-called ‘nostalgia film’ in contemporary society is a practice of “pastiche” in mass culture. Pastiche is, according to Jameson, like parody, “the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language”; but unlike parody, pastiche is a “neutral” and “blank” mimicry, without the subtleties of parody such as “ulterior motive”, “satirical impulse” and “sense of humour” (1985, p. 114). As to the ‘nostalgia film’, Jameson points out that this new

⁴³ The cheongsam also known in as qipao (旗袍), and Mandarin gown, is a one-piece Chinese dress for women, the modern cheongsam was created in the 1920s in Shanghai, and often has tight-fitting cut. Before 1949, cheongsam was very stylish and fashionable among socialites and upper class women in China.

genre is a pastiche of the past. Unlike real historical novels and films, nostalgia films have never presented any historical content but have “approached the ‘past’ through stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image, and ‘1930s-ness’ or ‘1950s-ness’ by the attributes of fashion” (1985, p. 117). Jameson reminds us that this new aesthetic mode is culturally a manifestation of commercial art and taste; audiences think they experience history in an active way; however, the fact is that pastiche of the stereotypical past is replacing ‘real’ history in this consumer society.

Back to the data, the discourse of *Empresses in the Palace* that students mimicked is a typical example of pastiche. It is an imitation of the ‘dead language’ used in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. But to suit the taste of the masses, this TV series has selected the easiest sentence forms and phrases to create an ancient atmosphere for its potential audience. Huang Yuning has argued that the discourse of *Empresses in the Palace* can only create “old fashioned illusion”, but not a taste of authentic history (ibid). Students, as audiences immersed in such popular culture, reflected their perception from this pastiche in the drama exercise. To some extent, their performance can be viewed as a pastiche (the simple imitation of the discourse) of a pastiche (the TV series).

The popular spy films and series referred to are another kind of pastiche. Some students were aware of the commercial (or even political) interests and popular taste they were expressing.

Vera: It is always a communist spy in the Kuomintang government. He must be intelligent. The historical background would allow the possibility for him to have had a very good education and maybe come from a wealthy family. But he becomes a communist. Ah, being a left-wing idealist is very correct in our country. He has to work in Nanjing or Chongqing, disguises himself as a Kuomintang. Whilst his communist colleagues are dressed like so many sacks of potatoes, he has the chance to wear a handsome military uniform and a bespoke suit, to play games with the villains in the same charming clothes. Well, that is the image we want to see, that suits everyone's dream, men's, girls', what more can we expect?

I have realised that the image of the traitor/hero that I presented in the first newspaper exercise could also be viewed as a practice of pastiche for it is very close to the formula of the hero in the nostalgic image that Vera describes here. In fact, I was trying to imitate the discourse of mass media when I designed this, without any concerns about the invidious nature of pastiche in my mind. But certain features of mass media and popular culture overlapped in this exercise.

In the pilot, as well as the interview, there were students who claimed that socio-historical knowledge could provide them with a context to imagine the scenes and characters in literary works. According to Tara's words above, the education in history provided at school and in many history books can hardly provide them with live images of the past or help them to imagine or to visualise scenes in literature. Thus they drew upon the pastiche images of

popular culture, which pander to the taste of most people in the contemporary Chinese consumer society. In this way, for them, history has become, like fashion, perfume and coca cola, a product of the capitalist market. "The past is a foreign country" as L. P. Hartley says in the novel *The Go-Between*. Since what they were interested in was an 'atmosphere', a 'feeling', a 'fantastical' time / space beyond real historical time, the nostalgic image of China presented in popular culture also held an exotic appeal for these young students, and the 'pastness' or pseudo-historical images of pastiche had displaced real historical understanding, reinforcing a whole set of aesthetic signs in their own, new productions.

Here a new question arises: from the perspective of teaching modernist literature, how should teachers deal with the issue of pastiche? I have to admit that in literature, especially fiction, authentic history is not always important. In this research project, both Borges and Yourcenar are very free to create fantasies and do not seem to be limited by historical details. But I also have to clarify two points, the first being that modernist writers, including Borges and Yourcenar, create fictional contexts as a poetic device, which is not the same as creating a pastiche to please the taste of consumer society. Secondly, unlike the two authors who were fully aware of the fictional nature of this setting; these students were steeped in the tradition of literary realism and had articulated the primacy of historical knowledge in their literary understanding. On the one hand, they drew historical data from fictional rather than historical sources, on the other, they more or less confused pastiche with actual historical knowledge, which means that the important

reference (history) in their literary understanding was counterfeit in ways they were unaware of.

More importantly, according to the data emerging from the field work, I personally doubt that pastiche can facilitate students in learning the narrative, rhetoric, and discourse of a literary text, let alone that of the literary tradition behind it. Huang Yuning criticises the producers of *Empresses in the Palace* for marketing the TV series as “the model of screenwriting under the influence of *Dream of the Red Chamber*” (ibid). By comparing this series with some British TV productions, Huang says that “you never see good British scriptwriters using Jane Austen as an endorsement for their writing, but the ghosts of great English literature are performing their magic in the air, the language of the dialogues are in the vein of the great tradition” (ibid).

Huang’s argument inspired me to think from an educational perspective that mechanically imitating a particular style would be much easier than really absorbing the subtlety of great literature. Pastiche has brought nostalgic illusion to the products of mass culture and also an illusion for students to feel confident about their literary or historical knowledge and performance. If I had left their learning process at this stage, with their illusory self-confidence and sense of satisfaction, my attempts to teach them to study form would have been totally in vain.

9.2 Drama as Literary Community

In Chapter 2, I discussed the possibility of integrating participatory drama with reception theory, using drama exercises to establish a literary community in order to improve students’ understanding of the text. This

section will examine how the theatrical communicative process affected students' reading experience of the two modernist texts. The analysis will focus on a few key concepts from reception theory, such as the implied reader, the horizon of expectation, and the interpretive community.

9.2.1 Implied Reader

The Implied Reader refers, according to Wolfgang Iser, to a "structure inscribed in the texts" rather than to the real existence of an actual reader (1978, p.60). Iser does not think that a literary text has only one correct interpretation; but he is also against the idea that the meaning of literature fully depends upon the reader's subjective opinion. He reckons that it is the "internal structure of the text" (Eagleton, 1983, p.84) that makes so many different interpretations emerge through the act of reading, and he uses the term 'implied reader' to describe this phenomenon. The implied reader is a collective of possible readings of the text, rooted in the structure of the text itself; and the act of reading by various actual readers is the process by which the implied reader reveals certain aspects of her features.

In this research project, I was trying to put Iser's idea of 'implied reader' into teaching practice. First, the drama lessons of the two stories were not trying to provide any standardized interpretation of the text, so students could feel free to contribute their own readings to this theatrical, interactive community. However, both of the cases had clear teaching content and objectives; for example, Borges's story aimed to investigate the theme of time and the author's mirror-effect structure, and Yourcenar's story focused on the discussion of beauty and art. Those teaching concerns came from my own

close reading and textual analysis (See Chapter 7 & 8). As an actual reader myself, I certainly could not exhaust all the possible readings of the text that the implied reader might suggest to the students. What I could do is try to be as faithful to the original text as I could in order to provide a veridical mediation to those young readers, which on the one hand framed students' reading within the original text and on the other hand produced a magnetic field to hold various literary understandings together in order to enrich and develop the whole community's understanding of the text.

In the class of *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* with Group 5, one of the drama exercises and the debate raised by the activity (See Ch. 7 for details) could exemplify my pedagogical assumptions above. In Exercise 6 (See Appendix B), every student experienced being desperate people begging Wang-Fo in vain and the artist feeling not at all moved. Influenced by the old art of storytelling, Yourcenar does not provide a detailed narrative here in the original. This drama exercise offered the chance for students to more fully investigate the complexity – the begging group including a hungry peasant, a greedy landlord, a poor mother and a heartbroken husband, their different intentions intended to make Wang-Fo's indifferent responses morally ambiguous. This five-minute exercise helped the students more or less experience the characters' feelings of frustration, anger and disappointment; and, interestingly, the incommunicable conversation between the artist and the begging person had a comic effect that most students enjoyed. The plot for this drama exercise came straight from the original text; the drama narrative only enriching it with details that Yourcenar chose to omit, all of which could possibly have happened in the context of the story. Yourcenar

demonstrates the complex and even morally offensive aspects of Kantian aesthetics through highly economical storytelling, and this exercise helped students to connect with this on a feeling level, albeit very playfully.

More importantly, this drama exercise also worked as the direct cause and the context for their subsequent intense debate about art, beauty, morality and humanity. It is worth noting that this debate was very unlike the kind of group discussion found in a traditional seminar. Due to the highly concise narrative in the original text, common readers would very likely follow the storyline rather than investigate the complexities suggested by details. Yet the drama exercise selected this particular slice of the story, presented the scene and invited students to explore it. They felt the indifferent response of the artist and struggled to hold a conversation between earthly desire and unworldly art. Although they were aware that it was a dramatized fictional situation (and laughed about the comic effect), they still engaged with those vivid feelings and tried to make sense of this failed communication actively in the subsequent discussion. The internal structure (the implied reader) hidden in the text revealed its features through the interaction of those understandings and feelings expressed during their debate. Although it could not gather all the possible interpretations of the story that 'the implied reader' could bring forth from the text, the communicative field of the drama class certainly expanded every single individual reader's reading experience of the text, including my own as the teacher.

9.2.2 Interpretive Community & Horizon of Expectation

Various opinions emerged during the students' debate on Wang-Fo in Group 5. The most intense discussion was among four students: Toby, Helen, Tara and Daniel. Toby emotionally attacked Wang-Fo's indifferent view of art from the perspective of morality and humanity, and expressed her understanding of the importance of sincerity and sympathy in artistic creation; whereas Helen reflected on her own reading experience (literary works in the aesthetic tradition, especially Oscar Wilde's stories and plays) and suggested that one ought to separate artistic values from moral values in literary understanding; Tara and Daniel defended the unworldly view of the artist and indicated the possibility, or even the necessity, of disassociating art/beauty from real life.

During the teaching process and the interview, the four students shared their own backgrounds with me. Toby came from a Christian family and had done media studies for her undergraduate degree. "I like literature but am not well-read like Helen" she told me. Helen studied playwrighting for her BA degree and is an enthusiastic reader of Shakespeare, Chekhov and Arthur Miller. She regards Flaubert's writing as 'the model of good style'. Both Tara and Daniel had undergone a long-term education in classical music (Tara studied opera and Daniel played the flute), their education providing them with real live experiences of working on art and with artists, becoming familiar with the disinterested view of beauty as relating both to art works and the process of creating art works. Tara and Daniel claimed to have an understanding of, and sympathy for, Wang-Fo's solitude as an artist obsessed by beauty. We

can see that factors like religion, family background (Toby), education (Tara and Daniel), aesthetic experience (Helen, Tara and Daniel) and life experience would affect a reader's understanding of a story, which may not be decisive, but is certainly not unimportant.

In reception theory, both Fish (1980) and Jauss (1970) have discussed the significance of the reader's pre-existing experience in shaping her understanding of a literary text. The notion of an interpretive community (Fish, 1980) suggests that the cultural context and value system which the reader belongs to provide her with a particular way to access the literary work.

Toby's Christian family background more or less affected her, seeing moral values as a crucial standard for evaluating literature. She herself confirmed this in interview – 'Of course moral value is the most important, not only in evaluating literature but in valuing anything!' Unlike Fish's social-cultural perspective, Jauss's argument on the horizon of expectation (Jauss, 1970) indicates that during the process of reading, the reader will test the aesthetic value of a text by comparing it with other works she knows already. In this case, Helen referred to Oscar Wilde, who used his works and his life to champion the idea of 'art for art's sake', The Aesthetic Movement that she knew of provided her with an explanation for some of Wang-Fo's behavior. In the interview, Helen also mentioned that the reading of *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* informed her about the complexity of human nature, so she tended not to use her own moral standards to judge literary characters. Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary* showed her "the best writing style" in her own words; but the author's distanced, remote view of aesthetics also convinced her that "a great passion for art may dry up your heart from having feeling for earthly

life". It is hard to find out whether Helen really compared Yourcenar's story with Shakespeare's plays and Flaubert's novel, but her reading experience certainly built up her horizon of expectation, especially in terms of the aesthetic implication, which explains why she tried to persuade Toby not to use moral standards to evaluate art and to strive to appreciate the disinterested view of artistic creation.

Tara and Daniel's responses can be analyzed within the theoretical frameworks of both the interpretive community and the horizon of expectation. Following Fish's theories, their education in classical music and life experiences with artists could be seen to explain from a social-cultural viewpoint why they more or less identified themselves with Wang-Fo in this story and saw him as one of them, 'I understand his solitude, I had similar feeling myself' as Tara said; and Daniel also mentioned that 'we saw many people like him in our lives'. However, from the angle of the horizon of expectation, classical music, even though it is different from literature, had also established their aesthetic outlook. Therefore in the debate, both of them tried to defend the importance and possibility of the detached, disinterested view in artistic creation; and also tried to explain, from their own experience, that the self-centered, morally offensive responses of the artist could possibly derive from the absolute concentration that the true artist needs.

During the theatrical-communicative process, drama worked as a literary community, in which various opinions met each other. The different social-cultural backgrounds and aesthetic experiences of these young readers

expanded the whole interpretive community and its aesthetic horizons, thus each reader could have the chance to broaden their view of reading. More importantly, the nature of drama as a literary community has nothing to do with persuading other people and reaching a common understanding through negotiation, which is against the claims of reception theory. Most students in interview (including the four I mentioned above) said they would hardly be persuaded by the other people in the class. The merit of the drama community is that the limited literary horizon of a single reader can be broadened when she encounters other people's thoughts during a drama exercise; and – very importantly - due to the fictional nature of the drama context, she does not have to experience negative feelings such as being patronized, being judged or forced to change their minds.

A mistake that I made with the same group of students more or less supports this point. After the debate in class, Group 5 had a short break. I mentioned to the students through informal chat that I found that students from an arts background, especially fine arts, tended to give Wang-Fo a degree of understanding and sympathy. The words annoyed Toby straightway; she got very emotional and said: 'I don't like such prejudice. It seems only those people who have the privilege to learn high art can really understand beauty, and we, the commoners, do not deserve to make sense of art. It is unfair. Good art belongs to everyone!' In fact, I was trying to share my findings without any prejudice against 'commoners' (although the action itself was a mistake for a teacher); on the contrary, I personally identify myself as a 'common' reader and my research project was intended to work in favour of the common reader. However, the sensitive girl immediately chose to

understand my words from the perspective of cultural capital, taste and a social system that served to undermine her. Whereas Tara, the one who had studied 'high art', also talked to me after class about feeling unfairly judged by her peers on many occasions because of her educational background in classical music. 'They often say, ah you studied opera, what a luxury! Your family must be very wealthy. And they said it not in a nice way. It is rather like – look we struggle to make our living but you are doing fancy stuff that cannot serve any good.' Tara's words remind me of another student in my pilot study, Charlotte, a girl who was enthusiastic about opera and ballet. Charlotte also told me in interview that she had to be 'very careful' not to show her interest in art to certain people, 'they would think I'm pretentious or privileged. People are very likely to choose a defensive attitude towards things they don't understand, I can feel rather hurt.' The fact is that neither Tara nor Charlotte came from privileged families or wealthy backgrounds, but when they expressed their passionate understanding of art, they and even their families could unfairly become the butt of hostile remarks. Here we can perceive a certain strength of participatory drama in this form of literary community. In the workshop of Wang-Fo, Group 5 did drama work together and had an intense debate on issues of art, beauty, aesthetics and morality. None of the students became upset by the social, cultural, and even political implications inherent to these issues. This was not because their discussion remained superficial, and in the analysis of this case (Ch. 7), I have shown how they explored the issues in-depth. Nor do I think that students in Group 5 were more generous or less sensitive to ideas of cultural capital, taste and the class system, as Toby's emotional response to my words would imply.

Students did not become upset because, first the translation to participatory drama was faithful to the original text, which drew a clear interpretive field for students to focus on the text itself rather than make arbitrary judgments about the characters or their classmates by making irrelevant or prejudicial suppositions; second, the discussion about art and beauty were centered around a fictional context, all the opinions, especially the controversial and even morally offensive ones, being applied to fictional characters rather than any actual student in the classroom.

9.2.3 Reception Theory, General Education & Open-space Learning

In Ch. 1 and 3, I explained my attempt to introduce Open-space Learning (OSL) to the curriculum movement of general education in Chinese higher education. Reflecting on the research data, I would like to analyze in this section the possibilities, strengths and limitations of this attempt to teach modernist literature within the theoretical framework of reception theory.

The six groups of students in my research project (the pilot group and the five groups in the field work) came from a variety of family and academic backgrounds. Lots of them contributed to the literary community in class from the perspectives of their own personal experiences or academic expertise in this drama project. Apart from the drama work and group debate that I have analyzed above, students in other groups also provided examples of establishing a shared body of knowledge, understanding, and enjoyment in the literary community through learning in participatory drama.

For instance, the students Nick and Vera in Group 3, who studied psychology, suggested that the Emperor's anger towards Wang-Fow as due

to his 'unhappy childhood'. In the exercise, the trial of Wang-Fo, they said to the Emperor, played by myself, that 'the loneliness and the long-term lack of real social life in your early life has made you choose to live in your fantasy land, so you are very easily overwhelmed by negative feelings'. With the same exercise in Group 4, Jessica, who was trained in the tradition of Stanislavskian acting, persuaded the Emperor by giving examples of a stage performance, which reflected her understanding of the relationship between reality, fiction, art and beauty derived from the realistic tradition (See Ch. 7 for more details). In the workshop of *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, Patrick, the student in Group 4, who was enthusiastic about history, shared with other students his knowledge about the demise of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire when they were working on the scene of 'the last 24 hours of the hero'. In the newspaper exercise, he also used his own understanding of modern Chinese history to suggest the real complex situation behind the narrative of history and the image of a national hero (See Ch. 8 for more details). And when Group 5 worked on the exercise of drawing the last picture by Wang-Fo, Ariel, who was an amateur cartoon illustrator, drew a portrait of Wang-Fo as a handsome young artist; and on the picture Tara wrote down the poem *Ich bin der Welt abhandengekommen*⁴⁴ by Friedrich Rückert, which she learnt as a song composed by Gustav Mahler, to illustrate the solitude of the artist. By using their artistic skills and acquisitions, they thus presented a work of ensemble

⁴⁴The English version by an anonymous translator: I am lost to the world/ with which I used to waste so much time,/ It has heard nothing from me for so long / that it may very well believe that I am dead! / It is of no consequence to me / Whether it thinks me dead; I cannot deny it, / for I really am dead to the world. / I am dead to the world's tumult, / And I rest in a quiet realm! / I live alone in my heaven, / In my love and in my song! (cited by Bork, 2002, p. 161)

that demonstrated their understanding of the character, the story and art; in their own words, 'art rewards me'⁴⁵ with love and joy through solitude; time changes and my hair goes grey, but the tree of art stays ever green.'

In students' feedback from the interview, they generally mentioned that working with other people in drama sometimes provided them with different perspectives of how to look at the story. 'Our visions are all limited,' said Patrick, 'and we all have blank spots in our knowledge, and our minds are shaped by our experience and study. It is nice to see how different people respond. It may open a new world to you.'

There are, however, a few concerns I have concerning the limitations of this literary community as pedagogy and of my research design that I need to mention here. First, it is possible that professional expertise can lead to misinterpretation of the text, and the teacher has to guide the drama work and discussion in case students' interpretation of the story moves to far away from the original text. For example, in Group 3, Vera in role as the person begging Wang-Fo for a picture, struggling with trying to communicate with the painter, played by her partner, suddenly asked him 'are you suffering from autism?' In the later discussion she said that Wang-Fo's lack of social skills and his artistic talent matched some symptoms of this particular syndrome. A few students nodded in the class and seemed willing to carry on discussing this topic. Maybe as psychology students such an approach to understanding characters made sense to some extent, but to pursue the theme of autism would deviate from the theme of art and beauty. And their

⁴⁵ In the drama exercise, Ariel and Tara said this statement in the voice of Wang-Fo, but Tara also claimed it is her personal feeling as well.

agreement on this could quickly close down the investigation of the actual complexities within the text, so I chose to cut off the discussion by saying 'yes, many talented people are slightly autistic. But is it the only reason?'

Second, although general education and OSL can provide interdisciplinary pedagogy, it is well possible that in China the diversity it theoretically offers would in practice be limited by the over-riding influence of social realism and historical materialism on different academic disciplines, especially those in the humanities such as philosophy, history, law, and politics. This research not only shows how Marxist literary criticism affects those students' literary understanding, but also reveals that Marx's historical materialism may have its influence in other fields. For instance, Jessica applied her experience of actor training in Stanislavski's system to make sense of the relationship between art and life. Helen, who studied playwrighting, also confirmed in interview the dominance of Stanislavski's theory in her undergraduate study. This influential theatrical theory in the vein of naturalism and realism has dominated modern theatre as well as theatre education in China for decades since it was introduced as the Soviet model (Brandon & Banham, 1993, p.52-53). And when Patrick talked about his history education at school, he also mentioned the outlook of historical materialism. My other concern is how the data emerging from the teaching practice demonstrates the poor academic performance of Chinese students in terms of literature and history. It is not only suggestive of problems in higher education and secondary school education in China, but also makes me wonder how much a Chinese student would contribute to the literary community from her own academic expertise.

Third, I have to admit that although this research tends to examine the possibility of conducting interdisciplinary pedagogy, for pragmatic reasons much of my data comes from MA students in Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University, which is a limit in my research design. However, I also need to point out that 1) the participants in this search still present certain diversities, even within the MA students in Drama and Theatre Education, who still came from a wide range of educational backgrounds at undergraduate level, ranging from literature studies, applied linguistics, education, playwriting, classical music, journalism, media studies and English language teaching; 2) although both general education and OSL aim to introduce interdisciplinary learning, the diversity of students is an uncontrollable factor, since general education in Chinese universities takes the form of elective courses, so that the teacher cannot decide which students come from which departments their students will come from. In this sense, my proposal for OSL can be seen to be an ideal to strive towards, one that may not always be easily realized.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

I approached this research project with the intention of investigating the possibility of using participatory drama to facilitate the learning of modernist literature in the context of higher education in China. The project focused on two aspects: 1) to introduce a new literary horizon different from Marxist literary criticism, especially the reflectionist theory; and a set of strategies or an approach from the perspective of poetics in order to study modernist literature in terms of form and narrative; 2) to examine the model of this innovative form of pedagogy which looks at the possibility of establishing a literary community for common readers in higher education to engage in reading complex texts and to enrich each other's literary understanding. The two case studies in this project utilized participatory drama as the main pedagogy with groups of students in Beijing, China and at Warwick University. The teaching offered the students a glimpse of literary modernism, and I, for one, certainly learnt a lot from the whole process.

10. 1 Research Questions

This research project mainly focused on 1) students' pre-existing literary horizons within the current educational context in China; 2) the translation of literary texts into participatory drama; 3) students' perceptions of the modernist preoccupations and narrative innovations within the selected texts; 4) the effectiveness of drama pedagogy.

Centred on these key aspects, the research questions informing this project were:

- ♦ How does the literary education students receive at school limit their literary horizons? How did this horizon impact on their understanding of the two modernist texts?
- ♦ How can modernist short stories be translated into participatory drama for teaching purposes? Were the translations faithful to the original texts in terms of meaning (modernist thought) and form (narrative innovation)? And did they facilitate students' learning of the two texts?
- ♦ In what ways can participatory drama establish a literary community based on the experience of common readers and their interactions with the texts as well as each other? And does it help young people to understand and to engage in the texts; and if so, in what ways?

10.2 Summary of the Project

This research project took the form of two case studies with six groups of students in higher education (One for pilot studies and five for field work). I conducted the initial version of the drama workshop adapted from *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* with a group of postgraduate students as my pilot study, in which I applied participant observation and group interviews to test the effectiveness of the translation of participatory drama, and to investigate the current situation of literary education in China and students' literary knowledge and reading experience. Due to the immaturity of the drama design and my lack of

teaching experience, the teaching practice, especially the participatory drama translation, was not very successful, but along with the data from interviews about the students' experience of literary education and private reading, the pilot informed my later research on a few matters: 1) Chinese students in higher education may have understandings of literature deeply rooted in the realistic tradition; 2) the result of current literary education in China may not live up to expectations, with university students from decent educational backgrounds apparently falling below basic standards set up by the national curriculum of literacy for senior high school students; 3) drama and short stories have very different narrative forms; as to modernist literature, with its narrative techniques and discourse could not be simplistically imitated in drama form.

I conducted the study with Group 1 and 2 in October, 2012, with improved drama lessons. However, I still faced a number of problems, particularly with the *Traitor/Hero* scheme. Groups 1 and 2 were students from a drama academy, which is not one of the competitive institutions in Beijing, and proved to be academically less capable than I had anticipated. Although their questionnaires were still informative, and they engaged in certain drama exercises, they showed very little interest in the stories, and failed to engage in the kinds of inspiring and intensive interaction with each other which other groups did. Therefore I was able to collect very little informative data from Groups 1 and 2.

The work with Group 3 came closest to the model I was seeking in the Chinese context (higher education). They were students across departments in one of the most prestigious universities, none of them were majoring in literature, which suited my intended focus on the common reader. Data emerging from this group was much richer than in Groups 1 and 2.

I improved the drama designs for Groups 4 and 5, students who had a similar academic level to those in Group 3. Since most of the students in Groups 4 and 5 had postgraduate education experience of drama education, they were consequently more familiar with the pedagogy. The improved drama schemes worked very well, especially with Group 5, and most of the qualitative data that I analysed are drawn from these two groups.

10.2 Main Findings

First, students in this research generally shared literary horizons deeply rooted in literary realism. The reflectionist theory had been widely applied in their school education. New pedagogies for teaching literature will face a number of challenges, especially from the examination-oriented educational culture. Moreover, this research not only shows how Marxist literary criticism has affected these students' literary understandings, but also reveals that the ideology of historical materialism has influenced students from other academic fields such as theatre and history. Their understandings, deeply rooted in realism, could not make sense of the logic of modernist fiction. With these two

texts, I found that some were really confused by a number of modernist innovations, such as its fantastical elements and the discourse of non-fiction being used in narrative fiction.

Second, students showed a lack of basic knowledge, not only with regard to literature but also in the Classical Chinese language and history they were supposed to have learned at secondary school. Although students from Groups 3, 4 and 5 had had a very good education they still demonstrated unanticipated levels of ignorance here. It reveals that there are problems in basic education in China. In addition, I also found that some students' literary imaginations were shaped by mass media. These young people, strongly influenced by historical materialism, were nonetheless seeking historical understanding from fictional films and TV programmes. On the one hand, it is a common phenomenon in a postmodern, consumer society; on the other hand, it demonstrates an ideological confusion surrounding their capacity to distinguish between historical fact and fantasy.

Third, as to the participatory drama translations, the narratives in modernist texts are very hard to present in this form, which is mainly because modernist literature breaks many literary conventions, especially in terms of narrative structure. My drama narratives struggled to reproduce the same style and effects without confusing the students. Even when the translations were relatively successful, with students engaging willingly in the drama exercises, it was still difficult to tell if

they had grasped the issues of structure and poetics I was trying to introduce to them.

Fourth, in this research participatory drama as an interdisciplinary pedagogy did provide a space for students to establish a literary community. Students from different backgrounds contributed their interpretations as well as their academic knowledge or life experiences, and these enriched their shared understandings within an egalitarian, friendly context. However, an effective literary community also has to build towards a better understanding of the original text. Although reading and teaching in this project worked as a growth from the original text and welcomed different reader's contributions, the teaching practice still informs me that growing literary understanding has to be grounded in the original text otherwise students, especially ones with strongly specialized knowledge systems, could easily leave class misunderstanding the text. For this reason, I would suggest that drama cannot replace reading and drama pedagogy should not replace other forms of teaching.

10.3 Limitations of the Research Project

This research attempted to introduce a different literary horizon for students to understand modernist literature. Participatory drama managed to provide a reader-centred literary community for students to engage in the story. However, the influence of reflectionist theory has a long-term effect, which cannot be easily challenged by six hours of drama workshops. From the feedback given by students who read the

original texts, their reading difficulties had not been transformed, even though they had engaged in the teaching process. The objective of introducing them to a modernist horizon needs to be framed in a longer term project, one which should still include lectures and seminars. I initially thought of giving follow-up lectures to analyse the texts with students by reflecting on their drama work; however, for practical and ethical reasons, I felt unable to pursue this. These students were already giving up their spare time and asking them to read and attend lectures in addition to their busy coursework would have been unreasonable.

Second, with Groups 4 and 5 I had a relatively better quality of class and feedback. The reasons could be the improved drama design, the fact that I had had more experience of conducting the workshops by then, that the students were more academically able, but it could also be because most of the students in these two groups had knowledge and experience of participatory drama and were thus familiar with this pedagogy. It informs me that the other three groups needed time to get used to the teaching method. This has implications for anyone who might try to adopt this pedagogy at university level for interdisciplinary purposes; perhaps the students need to be nurtured more carefully into what can be a disorienting practice for many of them.

Third, in Groups 3, 4, and 5 from which most of the useful data emerged, students were mainly female, and students' academic backgrounds in each group, especially Groups 4 and 5, were quite

similar. However, since general education takes the form of an elective course, even in a real educational context, the gender and background of students will always be an uncontrollable factor for the teacher.

Interdisciplinary pedagogy is an ideal, but the multi-diversity of students' backgrounds can hardly be determined beforehand.

10. 5 Recommendations

I would hope that the findings of this research might be of interest to anyone in Chinese higher education interested in reforming interdisciplinary pedagogy in general education programmes. My suggestion is that participatory drama should not replace conventional pedagogies such as lecture and seminar, but should work to complement this traditional form, preferably as an introduction to them, followed up with lectures and close reading of the original texts, which can be informed by reflecting back on the drama work. Reading is a loosely used word. To be more specific, classical literary works (including modern classics) can only be understood through a process of re-reading. It is unrealistic to expect that a three-hour drama workshop could make students understand a complex literary text. This introductory session should be regarded as a first reading of a difficult text, the objective for this encounter between the text and the reader being to build up interest and curiosity in the reader, enabling them to make an initial connection with it at a personal and communal level.

10. 6 Personal Significance

Only by translating the two texts into participatory drama did I start to realise the real complexity of the modernist narrative devices they employed. Through a few failures, I learnt the principle of translation – not to follow the original like a shadow; that absolute fidelity can never be achieved. Here lies the meaning of literary education – we deal with the afterlife of the great text, the task is to make sure it is deeply rooted in its own ground, to let it grow new leaves and celebrate its life with new generations of people.

Students greatly contributed to the literary community we established together in drama class, which also informed my understanding and enriched my own literary horizons. The enthusiasm and curiosity that they showed for the stories in the drama work helped me realise why Dr Johnson and Virginia Woolf cherished the characteristics of the common reader.

This thesis consists of a series of attempts that bear witness to my laborious love for literature. In Henry James's words – "we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art." Fortunately, as one popular artist has written, there is perhaps no success like failure. If anyone has learnt a lot from this whole process of study, I think that person is me. I would like to make use of what I have learned and carry on teaching; and I hope, to draw upon the words of Samuel Beckett, to fail better next time.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Original Texts

How Wang-Fo Was Saved⁴⁶

The old painter Wang-Fo and his disciple Ling were wandering along the roads of the Kingdom of Han.

They made slow progress because Wang-Fo would stop at night to watch the stars and during the day to observe the dragonflies. They carried hardly any luggage, because Wang-Fo loved the image of things and not the things themselves, and no object in the world seemed to him worth buying, except brushes, pots of lacquer and China ink, and rolls of silk and rice paper. They were poor, because Wang-Fo would exchange his paintings for a ration of boiled millet, and paid no attention to pieces of silver. Ling, his disciple, bent beneath the weight of a sack full of sketches, bowed his back with respect as if he were carrying the heavens' vault, because for Ling the sack was full of snow-covered mountains, torrents in spring, and the face of the summer moon.

Ling had not been born to trot down the roads, following an old man who seized the dawn and captured the dusk. His father had been a banker who dealt in gold, his mother the only child of a jade merchant who had left her all his worldly possessions, cursing her for not being a son. Ling had grown up in a house where wealth made him shy: he was afraid of insects, of

⁴⁶ The full text of How Wang-Fo Was Saved is from the book *Oriental Tales* (1985) by Marguerite Yourcenar, translated from the French by Alberto Manguel in collaboration with the author.

thunder and the j face of the dead. When Ling was fifteen, his father chose a bride for him, a very beautiful one because the thought of the happiness he was giving his son consoled him for having reached the age in which the night is meant for sleep. Ling's wife was as frail as a reed, childish as milk, sweet as saliva, salty as tears. After the wedding, Ling's parents became discreet to the point of dying, and their son was left alone in a house painted vermilion, in the company of his young wife who never stopped smiling and a plum tree that blossomed every spring with pale pink flowers. Ling loved this woman of a crystal-clear heart as one loves a mirror that will never tarnish, or a talisman that will protect one forever. He visited the teahouses to follow the dictates of fashion, and only moderately favored acrobats and dancers.

One night, in the tavern, Wang-Fo shared Ling's table. The old man had been drinking in order to better paint a drunkard, and he cocked his head to one side as if trying to measure the distance between his hand and his bowl. The rice wine undid the tongue of the taciturn craftsman, and that night Wang spoke as if silence were a wall and words the colors with which to cover it. Thanks to him, Ling got to know the beauty of the drunkards' faces blurred by the vapors of hot drink, the brown splendor of the roasts unevenly brushed by tongues of fire, and the exquisite blush of wine stains strewn on the tablecloths like withered petals. A gust of wind broke the window: the downpour entered the room. Wang-Fo leaned out to make Ling admire the livid zebra stripes of lightning, and Ling, spellbound, stopped being afraid of storms

Ling paid the old painter's bill, and as Wang-Fo was both without money and without lodging, he humbly offered him a resting place. They walked away together; Ling held a lamp whose light projected unexpected fires in the puddles. That evening, Ling discovered with surprise that the walls of his house were not red, as he had always thought, but the color of an almost rotten orange. In the courtyard, Wang-Fo noticed the delicate shape of a bush to which no one had paid any attention until then, and compared it to a young woman letting down her hair to dry. In the passageway, he followed with delight the hesitant trail of an ant along the cracks in the wall, and Ling's horror of these creatures vanished into thin air. Realizing that Wang-Fo had just presented him with the gift of a new soul and a new vision of the world, Ling respectfully offered the old man the room in which his father and mother had died.

For many years now, Wang-Fo had dreamed of painting the portrait of a princess of olden days playing the lute under a willow. No woman was sufficiently unreal to be his model, but Ling would do because he was not a woman. Then Wang-Fo spoke of painting a young prince shooting an arrow at the foot of a large cedar tree. No young man of the present was sufficiently unreal to serve as his model, but Ling got his own wife to pose under the plum tree in the garden. Later on, Wang-Fo painted her in a fairy costume against the clouds of twilight, and the young woman wept because it was an omen of death. As Ling came to prefer the portraits painted by Wang-Fo to the young woman herself, her face began to fade, like a flower exposed to warm winds and summer rains. One morning, they found her hanging from the branches of the pink plum tree: the ends of the scarf that was strangling

her floated in the wind, entangled with her hair. She looked even more delicate than usual, and as pure as the beauties celebrated by the poets of days gone by. Wang-Fo painted her one last time, because he loved the green hue that suffuses the face of the dead. His disciple Ling mixed the colors and the task needed such concentration that he forgot to shed tears.

One after the other, Ling sold his slaves, his jades, and the fish in his pond to buy his master pots of purple ink that came from the West. When the house was emptied, they left it, and Ling closed the door of his past behind him. Wang-Fo felt weary of a city where the faces could no longer teach him secrets of ugliness or beauty, and the master and his disciple walked away together down the roads of the Kingdom of Han.

Their reputation preceded them into the villages, to the gateway of fortresses, and into the atrium of temples where restless pilgrims halt at dusk. It was murmured that Wang-Fo had the power to bring his paintings to life by adding a last touch of color to their eyes. Farmers would come and beg him to paint a watchdog, and the lords would ask him for portraits of their best warriors. The priests honored Wang-Fo as a sage; the people feared him as a sorcerer. Wang enjoyed these differences of opinion which gave him the chance to study expressions of gratitude, fear, and veneration.

Ling begged for food, watched over his master's rest, and took advantage of the old man's raptures to massage his feet. With the first rays of the sun, when the old man was still asleep, Ling went in pursuit of timid landscapes hidden behind bunches of reeds. In the evening, when the master, disheartened, threw down his brushes, he would carefully pick them

up. When Wang became sad and spoke of his old age, Ling would smile and show him the solid trunk of an old oak; when Wang felt happy and made jokes, Ling would humbly pretend to listen.

One day, at sunset, they reached the outskirts of the Imperial City and Ling sought out and found an inn in which Wang-Fo could spend the night. The old man wrapped himself up in rags, and Ling lay down next to him to keep him warm because spring had only just begun and the floor of beaten earth was still frozen. At dawn, heavy steps echoed in the corridors of the inn; they heard the frightened whispers of the innkeeper and orders shouted in a foreign, barbaric tongue. Ling trembled, remembering that the night before, he had stolen a rice cake for his master's supper. Certain that they would come to take him to prison, he asked himself who would help Wang-Fo ford the next river on the following day.

The soldiers entered carrying lanterns. The flames gleaming through the motley paper cast red and blue lights on their leather helmets. The string of a bow quivered over their shoulders, and the fiercest among them suddenly let out a roar for no reason at all. A heavy hand fell on Wang-Fo's neck, and the painter could not help noticing that the soldiers' sleeves did not match the color of their coats.

Helped by his disciple, Wang-Fo followed the soldiers, stumbling along uneven roads. The passing crowds made fun of these two criminals who were certainly going to be beheaded. The soldiers answered Wang's questions with savage scowls. His bound hands hurt him, and Ling in despair looked smiling at his master, which for him was a gentler way of crying. They

reached the threshold of the Imperial Palace, whose purple walls rose in broad daylight like a sweep of sunset. The soldiers led Wang-Fo through countless square and circular rooms whose shapes symbolized the seasons, the cardinal points, the male and the female, longevity, and the prerogatives of power. The doors swung on their hinges with a musical note, and were placed in such a manner that one followed the entire scale when crossing the palace from east to west. Everything combined to give an impression of superhuman power and subtlety, and one could feel that here the simplest orders were as final and as terrible as the wisdom of the ancients. At last, the air became thin and the silence so deep that not even a man under torture would have dared to scream. A eunuch lifted a tapestry; the soldiers began to tremble like women, and the small troop entered the chamber in which the Son of Heaven sat on a high throne.

It was a room without walls, held up by thick columns of blue stone. A garden spread out on the far side of the marble shafts, and each and every flower blooming in the greenery belonged to a rare species brought here from across the oceans. But none of them had any perfume, so that the Celestial Dragon's meditations would not be troubled by fine smells. Out of respect for the silence in which his thoughts evolved, no bird had been allowed within the enclosure, and even the bees had been driven away. An enormous wall separated the garden from the rest of the world, so that the wind that sweeps over dead dogs and corpses on the battlefield would not dare brush the Emperor's sleeve. The Celestial Master sat on a throne of jade, and his hands were wrinkled like those of an old man, though he had scarcely reached the age of twenty. His robe was blue to symbolize winter,

and green to remind one of spring. His face was beautiful but blank, like a looking glass placed too high, reflecting nothing except the stars and the immutable heavens. To his right stood his Minister of Perfect Pleasures, and to his left his Counselor of Just Torments. Because his courtiers, lined along the base of the columns, always lent a keen ear to the slightest sound from his lips, he had adopted the habit of speaking in a low voice.

“Celestial Dragon,” said Wang-Fo, bowing low, “I am old, I am poor, I am weak. You are like summer; I am like winter. You have Ten Thousand Lives; I have but one, and it is near its close. What have I done to you? My hands have been tied, these hands that never harmed you.”

“You ask what you have done to me, old Wang-Fo?” said the Emperor.

His voice was so melodious that it made one want to cry. He raised his right hand, to which the reflections from the jade pavement gave a pale sea-green hue like that of an underwater plant, and Wang-Fo marveled at the length of those thin fingers, and hunted among his memories to discover whether he had not at some time painted a mediocre portrait of either the Emperor or one of his ancestors that would now merit a sentence of death.

But it seemed unlikely because Wang-Fo had not been an assiduous visitor at the Imperial Court. He preferred the farmers’ huts or, in the cities, the courtesans’ quarters and the taverns along the harbor where the dockers liked to quarrel.

“You ask me what it is you have done, old Wang-Fo?” repeated the Emperor, inclining his slender neck toward the old man waiting attentively. “I will tell you. But, as another man’s poison cannot enter our veins except

through our nine openings, in order to show you your offenses I must take you with me down the corridors of my memory and tell you the story of my life. My father had assembled a collection of your work and hidden it in the most secret chamber in the palace, because he judged that the people in your paintings should be concealed from the world since they cannot lower their eyes in the presence of profane viewers. It was in those same rooms that I was brought up, old Wang-Fo, surrounded by solitude. To prevent my innocence from being sullied by other human souls, the restless crowd of my future subjects had been driven away from me, and no one was allowed to pass my threshold, for fear that his or her shadow would stretch out and touch me. The few aged servants that were placed in my service showed themselves as little as possible; the hours turned in circles; the colors of your paintings bloomed in the first hours of the morning and grew pale at dusk. At night, when I was unable to sleep, I gazed at them, and for nearly ten years I gazed at them every night. During the day, sitting on a carpet whose design I knew by heart, I dreamed of the joys the future had in store for me. I imagined the world, with the Kingdom of Han at the center, to be like the flat palm of my hand crossed by the fatal lines of the Five Rivers. Around it lay the sea in which monsters are born, and farther away the mountains that hold up the heavens. And to help me visualize these things I used your paintings. You made me believe that the sea looked like the vast sheet of water spread across your scrolls, so blue that if a stone were to fall into it, it would become a sapphire; that women opened and closed like flowers, like the creatures that come forward, pushed by the wind, along the paths of your painted gardens; and that the young, slim-waisted warriors who mount guard

in the fortresses along the frontier were themselves like arrows that could pierce my heart. At sixteen I saw the doors that separated me from the world open once again; I climbed onto the balcony of my palace to look at the clouds, but they were far less beautiful than those in your sunsets. I ordered my litter; bounced along roads on which I had not foreseen either mud or stones, I traveled across the provinces of the Empire without ever finding your gardens full of women like fireflies, or a woman whose body was in itself a garden. The pebbles on the beach spoiled my taste for oceans; the blood of the tortured is less red than the pomegranates in your paintings; the village vermin prevented me from seeing the beauty of the rice fields; the flesh of mortal women disgusted me like the dead meat hanging from the butcher's hook, and the coarse laughter of my soldiers made me sick. You lied, Wang-Fo, you old impostor. The world is nothing but a mass of muddled colors thrown into the void by an insane painter, and smudged by our tears. The Kingdom of Han is not the most beautiful of kingdoms, and I am not the Emperor. The only empire which is worth reigning over is that which you alone can enter, old Wang, by the road of One Thousand Curves and Ten Thousand Colors. You alone reign peacefully over mountains covered in snow that cannot melt, and over fields of daffodils that cannot die. And that is why, Wang-Fo, I have conceived a punishment for you, for you whose enchantment has filled me with disgust at everything I own, and with desire for everything I shall never possess. And in order to lock you up in the only cell from which there is no escape, I have decided to have your eyes burned out, because your eyes, Wang-Fo, are the two magic gates that open onto your kingdom. And as your hands are the two roads of ten forking paths that

lead to the heart of your kingdom, I have decided to have your hands cut off. Have you understood, old Wang-Fo?"

Hearing the sentence, Ling, the disciple, tore from his belt an old knife and leaped toward the Emperor. Two guards immediately seized him. The Son of Heaven smiled and added, with a sigh: "And I also hate you, old Wang-Fo, because you have known how to make yourself beloved. Kill that dog."

Ling jumped to one side so that his blood would not stain his master's robe. One of the soldiers lifted his sword and Ling's head fell from his neck like a cut flower. The servants carried away the remains, and Wang-Fo, in despair, admired the beautiful scarlet stain that his disciple's blood made on the green stone floor.

The Emperor made a sign and two eunuchs wiped Wang's eyes.

"Listen, old Wang-Fo," said the Emperor, "and dry your tears, because this is not the time to weep. Your eyes must be clear so that the little light that is left to them is not clouded by your weeping. Because it is not only the grudge I bear you that makes me desire your death; it is not only the cruelty in my heart that makes me want to see you suffer. I have other plans, old Wang-Fo. I possess among your works a remarkable painting in which the mountains, the river estuary, and the sea reflect each other, on a very small scale certainly, but with a clarity that surpasses the real landscapes themselves, like objects reflected on the walls of a metal sphere. But that painting is unfinished, Wang-Fo your masterpiece is but a sketch. No doubt, when you began your work, sitting in a solitary valley, you noticed a passing

bird, or a child running after the bird. And the bird's beak or the child's cheeks made you forget the blue eyelids of the sea. You never finished the frills of the water's cloak, or the seaweed hair of the rocks. Wang-Fo, I want you to use the few hours of light that are left to you to finish this painting, which will thus contain the final secrets amassed during your long life. I know that your hands, about to fall, will not tremble on the silken cloth, and infinity will enter your work through those unhappy cuts. I know that your eyes, about to be put out, will discover bearings far beyond all human senses. This is my plan, old Wang-Fo, and I can force you to fulfill it. If you refuse, before blinding you, I will have all your paintings burned, and you will be like a father whose children are slaughtered and all hopes of posterity extinguished. However, believe, if you wish, that this last order stems from nothing but my kindness, because I know that the silken scroll is the only mistress you ever deigned to touch. And to offer you brushes, paints, and inks to occupy your last hours is like offering the favors of a harlot to a man condemned to death."

Upon a sign from the Emperor's little finger, two eunuchs respectfully brought forward the unfinished scroll on which Wang-Fo had outlined the image of the sea and the sky. Wang-Fo dried his tears and smiled, because that small sketch reminded him of his youth. Everything in it spoke of a fresh new spirit which Wang-Fo could no longer claim as his, and yet something was missing from it, because when Wang had painted it he had not yet looked long enough at the mountains or at the rocks bathing their naked flanks in the sea, and he had not yet penetrated deep enough into the sadness of the evening twilight. Wang-Fo selected one of the brushes which a slave held ready for him and began spreading wide strokes of blue onto the

unfinished sea. A eunuch crouched by his feet, mixing the colors; he carried out his task with little skill, and more than ever Wang-Fo lamented the loss of his disciple Ling.

Wang began by adding a touch of pink to the tip of the wing of a cloud perched on a mountain. Then he painted onto the surface of the sea a few small lines that deepened the perfect feeling of calm. The jade floor became increasingly damp, but Wang-Fo, absorbed as he was in his painting, did not seem to notice that he was working with his feet in water.

The fragile rowboat grew under the strokes of the painter's brush and now occupied the entire foreground of the silken scroll.

The rhythmic sound of the oars rose suddenly in the distance, quick and eager like the beating of wings. The sound came nearer, gently filling the whole room, then ceased, and a few trembling drops appeared on the boatman's oars. The red iron intended for Wang's eyes lay extinguished on the executioner's coals. The courtiers, motionless as etiquette required, stood in water up to their shoulders, trying to lift themselves onto the tips of their toes.

The water finally reached the level of the imperial heart. The silence was so deep one could have heard a tear drop.

It was Ling. He wore his everyday robe, and his right sleeve still had a hole that he had not had time to mend that morning before the soldiers' arrival. But around his neck was tied a strange red scarf.

Wang-Fo said to him softly, while he continued painting, "I thought you were dead."

"You being alive," said Ling respectfully, "how could I have died?"

And he helped his master into the boat. The jade ceiling reflected itself in the water, so that Ling seemed to be inside a cave.

The pigtails of submerged courtiers rippled up toward the surface like snakes, and the pale head of the Emperor floated like a lotus.

"Look at them," said Wang-Fo sadly. "These wretches will die, if they are not dead already. I never thought there was enough water in the sea to drown an Emperor. What are we to do?"

"Master, have no fear," murmured the disciple. "They will soon be dry again and will not even remember that their sleeves were ever wet. Only the Emperor will keep in his heart a little of the bitterness of the sea. These people are not the kind to lose themselves inside a painting."

And he added: "The sea is calm, the wind high, the seabirds fly to their nests. Let us leave, Master, and sail to the land beyond the waves."

"Let us leave," said the old painter.

Wang-Fo took hold of the helm, and Ling bent over the oars.

The sound of rowing filled the room again, strong and steady like the beating of a heart. The level of the water dropped unnoticed around the large vertical rocks that became columns once more. Soon only a few puddles

glistened in the hollows of the jade floor. The courtiers' robes were dry, but a few wisps of foam still clung to the hem of the Emperor's cloak.

The painting finished by Wang-Fo was leaning against a tapestry. A rowboat occupied the entire foreground. It drifted away little by little, leaving behind it a thin wake that smoothed out into the quiet sea. One could no longer make out the faces of the two men sitting in the boat, but one could still see Ling's red scarf and Wang-Fo's beard waving in the breeze.

The beating of the oars grew fainter, then ceased, blotted out by the distance. The Emperor, leaning forward, a hand above his eyes, watched Wang's boat sail away till it was nothing but an imperceptible dot in the paleness of the twilight. A golden mist rose and spread over the water. Finally the boat veered around a rock that stood at the gateway to the ocean; the shadow of a cliff fell across it; its wake disappeared from the deserted surface, and the painter Wang-Fo and his disciple Ling vanished forever on the jade-blue sea that Wang-Fo had just created.

Theme of the Traitor and the Hero⁴⁷

So the Platonic year

Whirls out new right and wrong,

Whirls in the old instead;

All men are dancers and their tread

Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

W. B. Yeats: The Tower

Under the notable influence of Chesterton (contriver and embellisher of elegant mysteries) and the palace counselor Leibniz (inventor of the pre-established harmony), in my idle afternoons I have imagined this story plot which I shall perhaps write someday and which already justifies me somehow. Details, rectifications, adjustments are lacking; there are zones of the story not yet revealed to me; today, January 3rd, 1944, I seem to see it as follows:

The action takes place in an oppressed and tenacious country: Poland, Ireland, the Venetian Republic, some South American or Balkan state. . . Or rather it has taken place, since, though the narrator is contemporary, his story occurred towards the middle or the beginning of the nineteenth century. Let us say (for narrative convenience) Ireland; let us say in 1824. The narrator's name is Ryan; he is the great-grandson of the young, the heroic,

⁴⁷ The full text of *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* is from the book *Labyrinths: selected stories and other writings* / Jorge Luis Borges ; edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby ; preface by André Maurois (2000, pp. 103-105).

the beautiful, the assassinated Fergus Kilpatrick, whose grave was mysteriously violated, whose name illustrated the verses of Browning and Hugo, whose statue presides over a gray hill amid red marshes.

Kilpatrick was a conspirator, a secret and glorious captain of conspirators; like Moses, who from the land of Moab glimpsed but could not reach the promised land, Kilpatrick perished on the eve of the victorious revolt which he had premeditated and dreamt of. The first centenary of his death draws near; the circumstances of the crime are enigmatic; Ryan, engaged in writing a biography of the hero, discovers that the enigma exceeds the confines of a simple police investigation. Kilpatrick was murdered in a theater; the British police never found the killer; the historians maintain that this scarcely soils their good reputation, since it was probably the police themselves who had him killed. Other facets of the enigma disturb Ryan. They are of a cyclic nature: they seem to repeat or combine events of remote regions, of remote ages. For example, no one is unaware that the officers who examined the hero's body found a sealed letter in which he was warned of the risk of attending the theater that evening; likewise Julius Caesar, on his way to the place where his friends' daggers awaited him, received a note he never read, in which the treachery was declared along with the traitors' names. Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, saw in a dream the destruction of a tower decreed him by the Senate; false and anonymous rumors on the eve of Kilpatrick's death publicized throughout the country that the circular tower of Kilgarvan had burned, which could be taken as a presage, for he had been born in Kilgarvan. These parallelisms (and others) between the story of Caesar and the story of an Irish conspirator lead Ryan

to suppose the existence of a secret form of time, a pattern of repeated lines. He thinks of the decimal history conceived by Condorcet, of the morphologies proposed by Hegel, Spengler and Vico, of Hesiod's men, who degenerate from gold to iron. He thinks of the transmigration of souls, a doctrine that lends horror to Celtic literature and that Caesar himself attributed to the British druids; he thinks that, before having been Fergus Kilpatrick, Fergus Kilpatrick was Julius Caesar. He is rescued from these circular labyrinths by a curious finding, a finding which then sinks him into other, more inextricable and heterogeneous labyrinths: certain words uttered by a beggar who spoke with Fergus Kilpatrick the day of his death were prefigured by Shakespeare in the tragedy *Macbeth*. That history should have copied history was already sufficiently astonishing; that history should copy literature was inconceivable. . . Ryan finds that, in 1814, James Alexander Nolan, the oldest of the hero's companions, had translated the principal dramas of Shakespeare into Gaelic; among these was Julius Caesar. He also discovers in the archives the manuscript of an article by Nolan on the Swiss *Festspiele*: vast and errant theatrical representations which require thousands of actors and repeat historical episodes in the very cities and mountains where they took place. Another unpublished document reveals to him that, a few days before the end, Kilpatrick, presiding over the last meeting, had signed the order for the execution of a traitor whose name has been deleted from the records. This order does not accord with Kilpatrick's merciful nature. Ryan investigates the matter (this investigation is one of the gaps in my plot) and manages to decipher the enigma.

Kilpatrick was killed in a theater, but the entire city was a theater as well, and the actors were legion, and the drama crowned by his death extended over many days and many nights.

This is what happened:

On the 2nd of August, 1824, the conspirators gathered. The country was ripe for revolt; something, however, always failed: there was a traitor in the group. Fergus Kilpatrick had charged James Nolan with the responsibility of discovering the traitor. Nolan carried out his assignment: he announced in the very midst of the meeting that the traitor was Kilpatrick himself. He demonstrated the truth of his accusation with irrefutable proof; the conspirators condemned their president to die. He signed his own sentence, but begged that his punishment not harm his country.

It was then that Nolan conceived his strange scheme. Ireland idolized Kilpatrick; the most tenuous suspicion of his infamy would have jeopardized the revolt; Nolan proposed a plan which made of the traitor's execution an instrument for the country's emancipation. He suggested that the condemned man die at the hands of an unknown assassin in deliberately dramatic circumstances which would remain engraved in the imagination of the people and would hasten the revolt. Kilpatrick swore he would take part in the scheme, which gave him the occasion to redeem himself and for which his death would provide the final flourish.

Nolan, urged on by time, was not able to invent all the circumstances of the multiple execution; he had to plagiarize another dramatist, the English enemy William Shakespeare. He repeated scenes from Macbeth, from Julius

Caesar. The public and secret enactment comprised various days. The condemned man entered Dublin, discussed, acted, prayed, reproved, uttered words of pathos, and each of these gestures, to be reflected in his glory, had been pre-established by Nolan. Hundreds of actors collaborated with the protagonist; the role of some was complex; that of others momentary. The things they did and said endure in the history books, in the impassioned memory of Ireland. Kilpatrick, swept along by this minutely detailed destiny which both redeemed him and destroyed him, more than once enriched the text of his judge with improvised acts and words. Thus the populous drama unfolded in time, until on the 6th of August, 1824, in a theater box with funereal curtains prefiguring Lincoln's, a long-desired bullet entered the breast of the traitor and hero, who, amid two effusions of sudden blood, was scarcely able to articulate a few foreseen words.

In Nolan's work, the passages imitated from Shakespeare are the least dramatic; Ryan suspects that the author interpolated them so that in the future someone might hit upon the truth. He understands that he too forms part of Nolan's plot. . . . After a series of tenacious hesitations, he resolves to keep his discovery silent. He publishes a book dedicated to the hero's glory; this too, perhaps, was foreseen.

Translated by J. E. I.

Appendix B

Summary notes for the Drama Schemes

Scheme 1: How Wang-Fo Was Saved

1. Warm up

Name game: Students sit in a circle, say their names. Play the name game 'Sharks'.

1) Walk around in the space. Call out a number and get into groups of that number; then make an image that teacher will call out. For example: Groups of 4 make snow-covered mountains/ torrents in spring / fields of daffodils/ the face of the summer moon.

2) Mantle of the expert: Students are to imagine that the best pictures of the best Chinese painter of all time will be exhibited. This is a fictional painter but typically and brilliantly Chinese. What will they exhibit? Students work in pairs imagining they are in the gallery. They pretend they are looking at the pictures. A is the expert, B the visitor. A describes one of these imaginary pictures to B who can ask any questions. This is a landscape. Stop and share the ideas. Then repeat with B the expert. This time it is depicting people.

(This exercise aims to find out what the students think about good art before they know the story)

2. Story Whoosh

Teacher tells the story of Ling's life. (About who he is, his wealthy family,

how he married his pretty wife, how he met Wang-Fo, how Wang-Fo taught him to appreciate beauty)

3. Metaphor

Students move in small groups. On FREEZE they are to make something as seen by Wang Fo in the story – a rather ordinary thing in daily life which looks extraordinary in his picture, such as a bush that looks like a woman with her hair falling.

4. Talk in role

Ling's wife commits suicide after Wang-Fo paints her a portrait. Why? Is it because the portrait is more beautiful than her, or because she cannot have the beauty that lasts forever in the painting, or just because her husband prefers the picture to her?

Students work in pairs or in groups of three, one as Ling's wife, the other one or two as people that she may go to for help, who can be her maid, friends, family, a Buddhist monk or nun, or a fortune teller.

5. Teacher tells the story: Ling's wife commits suicide. Ling leaves his past behind and travels with Wang-Fo over the Kingdom. It is murmured that Wang-Fo has the power to bring his paintings to life by adding a last touch of colour to their eyes...

Have a discussion: who would ask Wang-Fo to paint for them?

In the original text, the author writes: farmers would come and beg him to paint a watchdog, and the lords would ask him for portraits of their best warriors.

Are there any other people? What are they exactly looking for?

6. Work in pairs

A is Wang-Fo, B a person here to ask Wang-Fo to paint something of use to him/ her.

Set the scene according to B's role. For example, if B is a starving farmer, the setting can be - it has been a hard winter, children are ill, the ground is frozen, and tools are blunt.

B's job is to try to get Wang Fo to sympathise and agree to help; Wang Fo's job is to comment only on what he sees in the farmer as he talks to him – your face wrinkles when you are upset – how interesting. Hmm – your hand is outstretched when you beg, and your fingers twist interestingly etc'

This exercise lasts for two minutes or so. Discuss afterwards what it is like for the person who is begging and what it tells us about Wang-Fo.

7. Wang-Fo has been arrested but the students as yet don't know why. Ask students why they think the emperor has done this?

8. Wang-Fo's trial

1) Creating the space: using the chairs, tables and big pieces of papers to form the space of the hall in the Emperor's palace, students form a circle and take the role of Wang-Fo. Teacher takes the seat on the throne as the Emperor. When the Emperor speaks, the scene of the palace comes to life, but of course no-one speaks until the Emperor commands it. And if the Emperor commands then you must speak, of course.

2) Wang-Fo's self-defence: Teacher in role as the Emperor accuses Wang-Fo of being a liar, and asks him why he paints the world as a lie.

Ensuing discussion should bring out the points in the Emperor's story – not all of them are necessary – but should emphasise his disappointment in

seeing the huge difference between the beautiful pictures and the ugly reality, his kingdom is not worth reigning over, and his life has nothing to look forward to. And that is all Wang-Fo's fault! The Emperor (teacher) should challenge students to speak from Wang-Fo's viewpoint – what does the artist think about the relationship between reality and art / beauty? Is he telling a lie? What should a viewer look for from art? Is the artist responsible for the feeling of the viewer, and what if the viewer holds supreme power?

3) Persuasion: in groups of four or so, different groups take responsibility for the defence in the voice of someone in the palace. A high official; the eunuch, the Empress Dowager, or the Emperor's wife. They are to draft a speech to persuade the emperor and plead for his mercy. Teacher takes the role of the emperor and listens impassively. 'It is very well said, but I am still going to pass sentence on him and his servant!'

9. Wang-Fo's last work

The Emperor asks Wang-Fo to complete an unfinished picture, which is his early work. Ask students what would the picture look like? Give each group a large piece of paper and several marker pens, and then ask each group to draw the picture. Students have to add words which complete the statement 'For Wang-Fo, true art is ...', and 'For me art is ', or something to that affects.

Teacher (out of role) listens and views each picture, then asks for each group's final reflection on their response to the story and their understanding of it according to the picture they present.

10. The Ending

Invite one of the students to sit on the throne as the Emperor, and others

to stand on both sides as the Emperor's ministers, place on the floor a large piece of blank paper and a Chinese paintbrush.

Play music, teacher becoming the narrator and relating the end of the story in the third person, but during the storytelling, switching voices between the narrator and Wang-Fo by picking up/ putting down the paintbrush.

When the story reaches the point when Wang-Fo's picture becomes real, lift the paper as a background, take out a paper boat and present the rest of the story as a puppet show. End the story with the paper boat sailing behind the blank sheet of paper.

Scheme 2: Theme of the Traitor and the Hero

1. Warm up

Play music of a 1920s Argentine Tango.

Students walk around in the space. Call out a number and in groups of that number; make an image that the teacher will call out.

One person – a young and heroic general in 1920s Beijing

Groups of two – the young general and his beautiful lover

Groups of three - three conspirators scheming together

Groups of 4 – a hero, a beauty and two conspirators

2. Newspaper exercise (Part 1)

Teacher shows some sections of three features from two newspapers and one magazine. The three features are all about a famous writer is going to publish a biographical novel about her great-grandfather, a national hero who died one hundred years ago.

The sections from the three features are as following:

People's Daily (The Communist Party's mouthpiece newspaper): This biographical novel has depicted the complexity of Chinese society in early twentieth century. The hero, Yeh Lin-chih, is a talented general, political leader and the pioneer of the Northern Expedition. In his short life, Yeh devoted himself to the career of establishing a new democratic China. His courage and devotion have encouraged more and more revolutionaries to fight for the revolutionary ideal, generation after generation.

Southern Weekend (The liberal newspaper): Yeh Lin-chih is a

contradictory figure in early twentieth century China. He was born in a North Warlord's family but became a rebellious son of his 'father'. He wrote poems when he studied in Europe but joined the military service and kept a traditional Chinese lifestyle until he died. He was a passionate public speaker but also a cunning and shrewd politician. This is such a mysterious person who represents the complexity of Chinese history in the early twentieth century.

Panorama (magazine of unofficial history and nostalgic culture): Yeh Lin-chih might have been forgotten by young people nowadays, but he was undoubtedly one of the iconic celebrities during the period of 'the Republic of China'. It has been said that the young general was tall, eloquent and impossibly charming; people who met him often said that his eyes were as handsome as an ancient warrior's. His love story with his wife is a new classic romance of the hero and the beauty in the twentieth century. His death is still a mystery. It has been said he was murdered by the Northern Warlord's government. He was shot while watching Peking Opera *Denouncement of Cao Cao*, a story about a proud gentleman beating a drum denouncing Cao Cao, the cruel and merciless tyrant. This old and beautiful art work more or less reflected his destiny.

Discussion

What have these three features told us about this character? What kind of person do you think he would be like? List five words to describe him. (Intelligent? Charming? Brave?)

To all the information provided by the three features, what are the

things you believe, what you don't believe, and what you are not sure about?

3. Filmmaking exercise (Part 1): Costume and set design

The teacher tells students the context of this exercise: a film producer wants to make a film production based on this new biographical novel. Although the book has not come out yet, the film crew is ready to get on with their work.

Students work in two groups, one as the team of costume and make-up designers and the other in charge of film properties and set design. Each team has to list ten items to create the look of the character or to build up the character's private space for the film shooting.

4. Filmmaking exercise (Part 2): chorus

Students work into three groups as supporting actors, each group presenting a scene of people in 1920s Beijing talking about the hero before he returns in military triumph. The three scenes take place in an old teahouse, an upper class ladies' party, and a senior official's smoking room. (Other possibilities: street and college).

5. Game: The Traitor and the Hero

Teacher tells students we have found out the author's journal, which records her thoughts and the notes she took while writing this biographical novel. On one page, she writes that:

'In my childhood, father used to play an old game with us. He said he learnt it from his father. It is our favourite. When I grow up, I play it with children in our big family.'

Teacher invites students to play this game. But instead of telling the

rules before the game starts, show the rules through the first round of the game.

First, every student picks up a playing card from the teacher. The red joker is the hero; the black joker is the traitor. All the other people are hero's companions - the good men.

Then, the hero declares 'his' role by showing his card to everyone. But others keep their cards secret. So no one knows who the traitor is.

Everyone closes their eyes except the traitor. The traitor can kill a person (except the hero). The one who is killed is out.

Open eyes and see who has just been killed, discuss who the traitor is, the hero can sign the order for the execution of the one he suspects. (The hero may listen to his companions or may not). The one who is sentenced to death (who may be innocent) is out.

If the hero finds out the real traitor and sentences the traitor to death, the hero wins.

If the traitor kills all the good men and faces the hero in the end, the traitor wins.

Play the game again, this time give one student two cards – the traitor's card and the hero's card.

Discussion

What is the feeling of being a traitor/ hero? How did you feel when you were killed by the hero?

6. The night before the assassination

The author's journal also includes a piece of hastily written draft, which the author has crossed out. Instead of reading it out, the teacher

presents the scene in the draft with the help of one student by acting it out.

It is around nine o'clock on the 6th, August, 100 years ago.

The student stands in front of others as the hero, and is asked not to speak or move. The teacher is in role as the conspirator (Nolan in the original text) and speaks to the hero:

'My dear friend, I never expected our friendship would end up like this. We fought for the same ideal before, at that time we were so young... I wish I could do something for you this time, but I can't.

I am ...urged on by time, but everything has been set up now, and I'm quite pleased about it. I can't take all the credit. Had a bit of help, from the great playwright. Can't believe the Imperialist is on our side this time (*take out a copy of Julius Caesar and pass to the hero/ traitor*). You may want to have a look again. Oh, don't worry. You will die a hero. Good night, dear friend.'

Discussion:

What do students think has happened in this scene?

7. Filmmaking exercise (Part 3): the last 24 hours of the hero

Discussion:

Who will the hero would stay with? His companions? Political rivals?

His wife and children? Or any strangers?

Where would he meet or stay with them?

What would they do?

Students work in groups of three, deciding who is A, B, C.

A is the hero, B and C are other people with him.

Have a short interaction, decide what they would say and do.

Group 1: the hero and his companions. They have received information that there is a traitor hiding among them, they discuss whether they should carry on their next military operation or not.

Group 2: the hero, his wife and one of his companions. The wife talks about the nightmare she had last night and feels it was an ill omen. She persuades the hero to avoid all public activities on that day; and she is also told that in their hometown their family hall for worshipping Buddha got set on fire by thunder the other day. She is terribly worried about her husband's safety.

But his companion persuades him to ignore her and leave with him.

Group 3: the hero and the secret agencies. They know someone is planning an assassination against the hero. Time is urgent; they must pass their direct liaison and send the deadly important message to the hero as soon as possible. But the hero does not know them.

8. Newspaper exercise (Part 2)

Out of the context of filmmaking, let's go to the day after the assassination in 'real' history.

Students work in three different groups as journalists and editors in 1920s China to report the assassination of the hero. The three papers are for three different groups of readers, which are the main-stream authority, the liberal intellectual, and tabloid readers.

Each group provide a headline, a news photo (make a still image) and the first paragraph of their report.

9. The final discovery

Teacher reads out the rest of the author's journal.

'When I was a little girl, the adults in my family used to tell me, not without pride, the stories about my legendary great grandfather. I was always thinking, one day when I grow up, when I become a writer; I must use my words to revive his legend. Twenty years ago, I was studying theatre in the United States. I tried to write his story. I wanted to write a tragedy on the last day of his life. I believed that even if I just wrote down the familiar plots and dialogues I heard in my childhood, it would turn out to be a terrific work. But when I started, I was astonished that what I was writing was just a piece of counterfeit, and the genuine was my idol William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. I wondered why. "That history should have copied history was already sufficiently astonishing; history should copy literature was inconceivable..."⁴⁸ I had been confused for many years, until one day, one day I played the game – the traitor and the hero with the children in our family, I passed two cards to my daughter by mistake. I suddenly realised ...

(The next page of this journal is missing.)

⁴⁸ This line is from the original text.

Appendix C

Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph

